

A CASE OF INTERNET FRAUD / LEAF-PEEPING IN CANADA

The Atlantic Monthly

SEPTEMBER 1997

A GRIEF LIKE NO OTHER

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HOW DO YOU RECOVER FROM THE

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MURDER OF A SON OR DAUGHTER?

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FOR THOUSANDS OF DISTRAUGHT

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AMERICANS, THE TERRIBLE ANSWER

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IS THAT YOU DON'T.

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**BY ERIC
SCHLOSSER**



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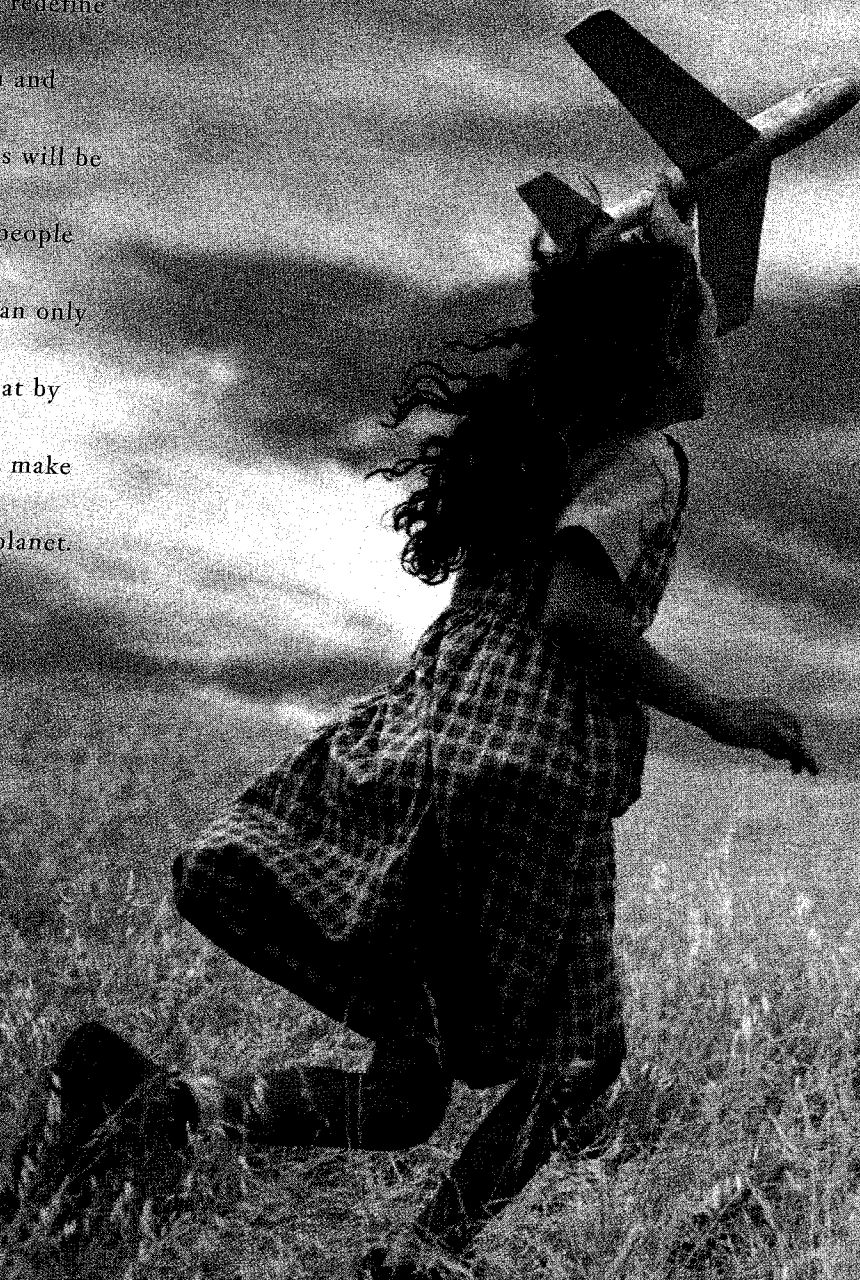
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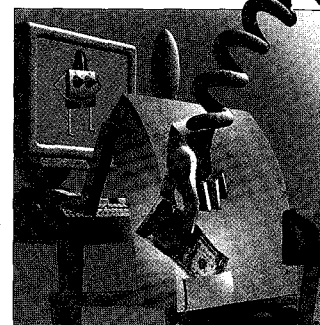
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Nearly a half million Americans have been murdered in the past two decades alone—and we are by now accustomed, perhaps almost inured, to such grim statistics. What we almost never hear about is the lives lived by the loved ones each murder victim leaves behind—the legions of friends and family for whom the effects of the trauma may never ease. Many parents of murdered children have turned to one another for support. Our correspondent presents some of their stories.

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77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

THE image is so pervasive as to have become a cliché: the flashing lights of squad cars, the ribbons of yellow tape marking off the scene of a violent crime, the intrusive presence of a reporter for a local television station, sticking a microphone into the face of a shocked and grieving relative of the victim and asking, "How do you feel?"

Murder is ubiquitous in America, and murder and its aftermath are legitimate subjects for news coverage—even if, as Eric Schlosser explains in this month's cover story, "A Grief Like No Other," most coverage can scarcely hint at the true impact of murder on a victim's immediate family. One thing that makes family members and others angry is an attitude toward murder which at times moves beyond the insensitive and toward the cavalier. This tendency has many outlets, from Hollywood blockbusters to remarks made in casual conversation. TV news programs—overhauled in recent years seemingly in order to maximize depictions of social mayhem in a fast-paced environment of garish electronic color—are only the most apparent.

Parents of Murdered Children, an organization described in Schlosser's article, has drawn up a list of guidelines for reporters who write or broadcast stories about murder. Here is some of what the organization suggests: Attempt to interview people only if they have expressed a willingness to be

interviewed; take seriously a request for privacy. Be willing to accept a written statement, or an interview with a family spokesperson. Be compassionate and sensitive. Be more flexible than you would be with other sources. Do not use video that is exceptionally violent or graphic. Tell family members where and when the story will appear. Do not tell family members that you understand what they are going through. Do not give out the addresses and phone numbers of family members to other journalists. Be prepared for anger, toward the media in particular.

A number of national organizations now exist in order to assist family members and others who are coping with the murder of a loved one, to help reduce the prominence of violence in popular culture, and to secure certain legal rights for victims' families. The most encompassing group is the National Organization for Victim Assistance, at 1757 Park Road, NW, Washington, D.C. 20010 (202-232-6682); it has ties to most of the leading organizations nationwide. An information clearinghouse on victims' issues is operated by the National Victim Center, at 2111 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201 (800-FYI-CALL). Parents of Murdered Children is headquartered at 100 East Eighth Street, Suite B-41, Cincinnati, OH 45202 (513-721-5683). —THE EDITORS

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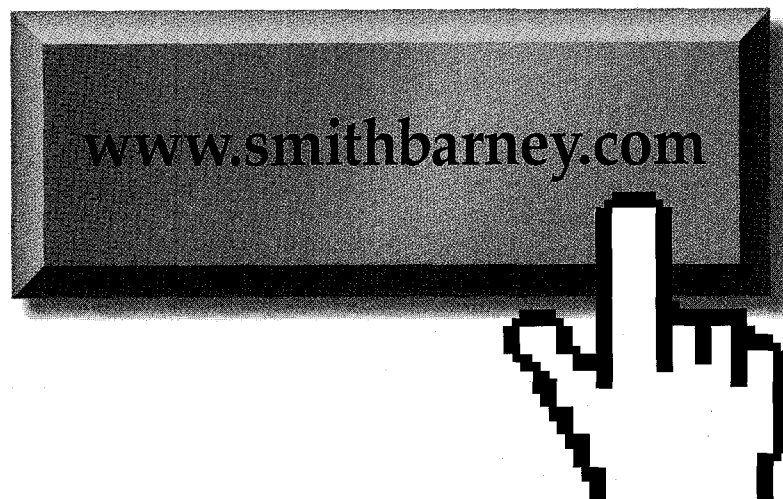
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LETTERS

The AIDS Exception

As a physician who treats patients with HIV/AIDS and a historian of medicine (I wrote *Quarantine! East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892*), I was astounded by "The AIDS Exception: Privacy vs. Public Health" (June *Atlantic*).

To begin with, Chandler Burr neglects the most essential (and maddening) aspect of public health: the entire endeavor begins with the word "public," and is therefore political and contentious by nature. Despite Burr's incredulity that political and social issues appear to dominate many AIDS/HIV public-health policies, perhaps the most consistent feature of U.S. public-health efforts over the past 200 years has been a complex maelstrom of social, economic, religious, ethnic, and cultural influences that characterize each episode of epidemic disease.

Moreover, Burr erroneously conflates public-health approaches for airborne infectious diseases such as diphtheria, influenza, measles, and to a lesser extent tuberculosis with those for the primarily sexually transmitted disease AIDS. Airborne diseases may be transmitted simply by breathing in a closed space with an infected (and coughing) person. HIV, on the other hand, is spread by unprotected sex or the commingling of blood. By not making these distinctions clear, Burr suggests that blanket procedures exist for public-health control. Different modes of transmission require different methods of prevention and containment. Yellow fever is spread by mosquitoes, making mosquito netting and insecticides important public-health investments for its control; widespread programs for condom and needle distribution and, above all, safe-sex education are the most appropriate approaches for controlling AIDS.

Howard Markel, M.D.
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Chandler Burr proposed a singular set of rules for fighting all epidemics. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would like to explain why a comprehensive approach to prevention constitutes sound public health and is the most effective way to decrease the spread of HIV infection.

The article recommends three specific tools for HIV prevention—routine HIV testing, reporting of cases, and partner notification. The CDC has always supported these approaches as part of comprehensive HIV-prevention programs, and has worked with agencies at the state and local level to implement them as appropriate. However, these tools, among many others, must be put into the context of the unique features of the epidemic in different parts of the country.

For example, communities with a low prevalence of HIV infection should not spend scarce resources conducting routine HIV screening in hospitals, where few cases would be detected, when providing education and services to the groups at highest risk for HIV would have a greater impact. On the other hand, in high-prevalence areas it may be most effective to couple a more widespread use of HIV counseling and testing with efforts tailored to reach those at highest risk, such as street outreach to drug users and their sexual partners. The CDC actively supports community-based decision-making about HIV-prevention programs. Our experience has shown that HIV prevention works best if it is designed and implemented in cooperation with the communities affected, rather than being mandated from the federal level.

Protecting the public health requires voluntary individual commitment as well as sound public leadership. This is as true for preventing HIV as it is for preventing other infectious diseases. People have to come in for testing, provide their contacts' names, comply with complex treatment options, and change

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The Other White Meat.

behavior to prevent the spread of infection. Historically, approaching individuals in an atmosphere of cooperation and trust has worked better. We can't mandate HIV away. It's just not that simple.

Helene D. Gayle, M.D.
*Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
Atlanta, Ga.*

Chandler Burr deserves great credit for his clear call for sound public-health policy to be applied to the AIDS epidemic, and for his praise of the legislation introduced by Representative Tom Coburn that answers that call. But Burr's declaration that "some skepticism toward legislation like Coburn's is warranted [and] conservatives representing themselves as public-health advocates are certainly vulnerable to a charge of hypocrisy" does Representative Coburn a disservice.

Coburn is first and foremost a practitioner of obstetrics and family medicine who before his election to Congress, in 1994, earned the trust and respect of the residents of Oklahoma's Second District by delivering more than 3,000 babies. He would in fact be a hypocrite were he not to continue his concern for health and medicine as a member of Congress.

Dick Armey
*U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.*

Chandler Burr's article contains many valuable observations, but its oversimplifications have already caused mischief when misinterpreted by ideologues. Charles Krauthammer, who selectively cited it in a *Washington Post* editorial, paraphrased Burr to make his case that work for an AIDS vaccine is unnecessary because behavioral restraint is the answer. The ease with which pundits have deconstructed the complexities of this scourge is a disservice to those of us who have been struggling in the trenches since the start of the epidemic. Burr's article conveniently sidesteps the enormous costs of putting into place the programs he advocates. Has he calculated how many public-health workers would be required to implement an effective partner-notification program across the United States?

Kenneth H. Mayer, M.D.
*Director, Brown University AIDS Program
Providence, R.I.*

Chandler Burr replies:

Howard Markel adumbrates two elementary points of public health—that "public" means a complex and difficult mixture of medicine, police power, demographics, and civil rights, and that each virus bacterium's different properties mandate that it be treated with the right combination of epidemiological weapons. I make exactly these two points on the first page of my article.

Markel's letter is, however, helpful in one way: the final sentence is as good an example as any of the anti-empirical dogma holding that only exceptionalism's elected tools—needle exchange, condom availability, and sex education—work against HIV/AIDS. Helene Gayle's essential point—that in fact we need to use both these new and valuable public-health tools and the traditional tools of routine testing, confidential reporting, and partner notification, in ways appropriate for the race, sexual orientation, sex, and economic situation of various populations around the country—is a nice counter to Markel's typically exceptionalist policy monomania.

I should certainly have stated that Tom Coburn is a physician. His conservative view of condoms—that they and, more important, the "pro-sex" ethos surrounding them actually encourage more and more risky sexual activity—is quite interesting and should be pursued. But his conservative position against needle exchange is simply anti-empirical; the data show clearly that this is an effective means for slowing HIV transmission, as the American Medical Association itself recently officially affirmed.

Kenneth Mayer says that in my article I sidestep the immense problem of the costs of traditional public health. I admit this. Part of the very complex answer to this problem is self-restraint, and another part is the best possible, most inclusive, appropriately administered, and preventive cost-containing public-health measures we can muster.

Do We Consume Too Much?

I am very much in sympathy with the spirit of Mark Sagoff's elegant essay "Do We Consume Too Much?" (June *Atlantic*), which quotes me and cites work

I have contributed to. Unfortunately, Sagoff draws from two different reports very selectively, often missing crucial points in ways that mislead his readers.

Sagoff is correct that we are not running out of nonrenewable materials such as metals and most fuels, but he ignores extensive evidence that many developing countries are facing growing shortages of renewable resources—fuel wood, livestock fodder, subsistence crops, fish, and fresh water—and increasing degradation of the forests, fertile soils, fisheries, and watersheds that produce them. He also ignores evidence that world oil production is likely to peak and begin to decline sometime in the next few decades. Certainly, substitutes for all these resources (except water) exist, but nearly a third of the world's population is too poor to buy them, and depends on local biological systems for subsistence, fuel wood, and livelihood. Likewise Sagoff cites our evidence that the United States is largely self-sufficient in the natural resources it consumes (with the important exception of oil) but ignores the evidence that smaller industrial countries are heavily dependent on imports of raw materials—35 percent of the total in Germany, more than 50 percent in Japan, 75 percent in the Netherlands. The damage done by logging forests in Southeast Asia to supply wood for Japan, for example, is amply documented. Indeed, other than in the Amazon Basin and the boreal forests of Canada and Russia, the world's frontier forests—those that represent intact ecosystems—have been decimated, and virtually all the remnants are severely threatened.

I endorse Sagoff's moral and spiritual arguments for environmental preservation, and perhaps those are central for rich, well-endowed countries like the United States. For a large part of the world's population, however, environmental resources are critical not only to survival but also to any hope of social stability and progress.

Allen L. Hammond
*World Resources Institute
Washington, D.C.*

Mark Sagoff levels an unfair criticism at environmentalists when he says that they are making a mistake by emphasizing the economic, market-driven assessments of natural resources instead of extolling the "aesthetic, ethical, and

spiritual” value of nature. Environmentalists understand that the concepts of renewable and sustainable consumption really have nothing to do with species protection (there is no such thing as a sustainable level of human-caused extinction), and we would rather argue simply that animals deserve protection and respect because of their beauty, because they are part of a complex world, because they tell a story of struggle and survival in the face of overwhelming odds, or, if you are religious, because they are the work of the Creator. But let’s be honest. How often has modern society backed species preservation for purely moral and aesthetic reasons when economic advantages could be gained through exploitation or even eradication? In nearly every environmental dilemma preservation provides economic as well as aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual payoffs. Environmentalists, focused on safeguarding nature before it is too late, are forced to choose the argument that has the best chance for immediate favorable reaction—that is in the best economic interest of human beings. Until we arrive at the day when our society learns how to balance economic prosperity with moral and aesthetic sensitivity, environmentalists will be forced publicly to emphasize the inferior element of their work.

Matthew Schenker
Amherst, Mass.

Mark Sagoff was too optimistic. He evidently ignores the loss of temperate and tropical rain forest, the acute water shortages in our Southwest and in Africa, accumulating waste and pollution, topsoil loss, overpopulation, and so forth. If three or four billion people in the Third World want to raise their living standards to those of Greece or Portugal, where does Sagoff think the resources are going to come from?

Edd Doerr
Silver Spring, Md.

Mark Sagoff replies:

Allen Hammond correctly points to the plight of nearly a third of the world’s people, who, since they are too poor to buy the kinds of technology that feed, clothe, and shelter those in wealthier nations, must live directly off the land and thus deplete its resources. I urged policies to transfer technology to those who, because they “are too poor to use sound

farming practices are compelled to over-exploit the resources on which they depend.” As if to refute my thesis that the North excludes imports from rather than exploits the resources of the South, Hammond points out that smaller industrial nations are heavily dependent on imports of raw materials. They import raw materials, however, predominantly from other industrialized countries. Industrialized nations trade, even for raw materials, nearly exclusively among themselves.

There is a great deal of truth in the observation by Matthew Schenker that environmentalists often must appeal to instrumental arguments for instrumental reasons—because instrumental or economic arguments for protecting nature, however precarious, succeed better than ethical ones in swaying public policy. Yet in doing so environmentalists embrace the cost-benefit framework that is likely in the long run to undermine attempts to preserve the natural environment.

In Translation

Regarding “Puttermesser in Paradise,” by Cynthia Ozick (*May Atlantic*), let me point out that “Puttermesser” does not translate from German into English as “butter knife.” The English word “butter” is *Butter* in German also, and is pronounced more like “booter” than anything that would sound like “putter.” The German word *Pute* is the closest to Ozick’s invention; it means “turkey hen.”

Ritamarie Sustek
Walnut Creek, Calif.

Cynthia Ozick replies:

Ritamarie Sustek *hat recht*: the English word “butter” is properly rendered in German as *Butter*. However, Ruth Puttermesser’s surname is Yiddish, an autonomous language as independent of German as is Dutch or Swedish. In Yiddish the word for “butter” is *putter*.

Advice & Consent

Randall Rothenberg’s review of my *Breaking Up America* (“How Powerful Is Advertising?,” *June Atlantic*) contained a number of major misreadings that suggest a greater concern with fitting my argument into his agenda about masscult than

with accurately representing the book.

The review states that I take advertising to be the cause of social fragmentation in contemporary America. The book itself stresses that advertisers and media practitioners take their cues from their understanding of society, which they see as breaking up. Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s marketers and the media developed an interest in “detecting and exploiting social divisions” (p. 184). They, in turn, magnified those divisions. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of how and why.

The review says that I am naive for believing “without question” the statements of advertising and media practitioners. On the contrary, in four chapters I specifically address the issue of “hype” regarding the new-media world. More important, my book centers on what ad and media firms are *doing*, not just saying, to develop targeting technology.

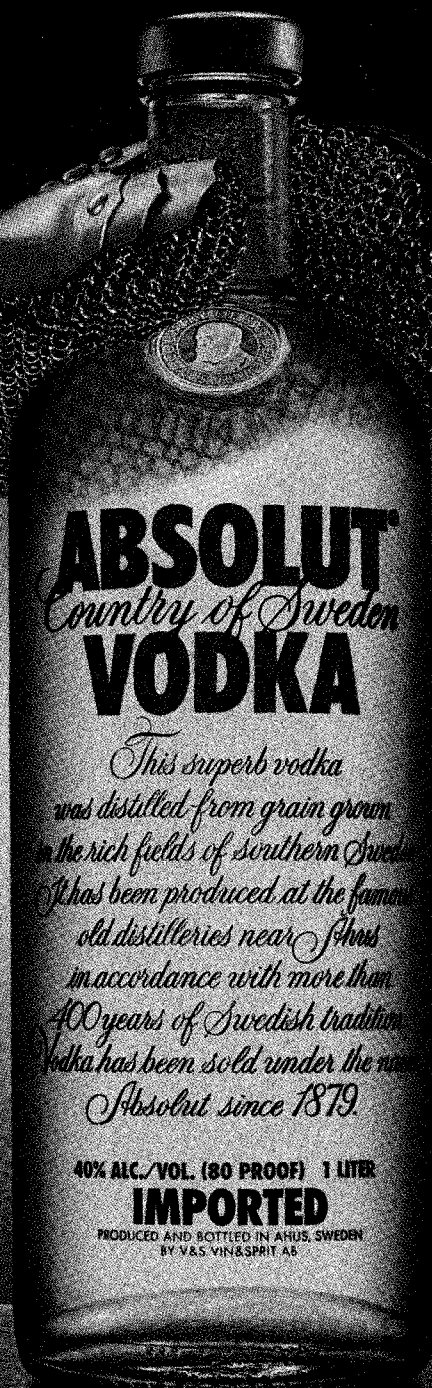
Nor do I regard community-building E-mail, computer bulletin boards, and newsgroups as “divisive new technologies.” The review ignores my theme that society needs a vigorous balance between two types of media: “segment-making” (for example, little magazines and newsgroups), which create strong communities, and “society-making” (for example, widely shared TV channels), which encourage different communities to come together to argue and share stories. American society has never achieved a satisfactory balance of the two, and is now “losing [even] the potential” to achieve it because the lure of target marketing is encouraging “a profound movement by advertisers away from society-making media” (p. 4). Contrary to the review (which accuses me of “masscult nostalgia”), the book explicitly states that “the proper response to this hypersegmentation of America is not to urge a return to the mass-market world of the 1960s and 1970s” (p. 199).

Rothenberg is wrong as well when he writes that *Breaking Up America* “persists in attributing to a chaotic and variegated media system immediate and specific social and cultural consequences.” I do indeed suggest social consequences—that’s the point of the book. But as I wrote (p. 199), “It will take time, perhaps decades, for the full effects of the emerging media world to take shape.”

Joseph Turow
Philadelphia, Pa.



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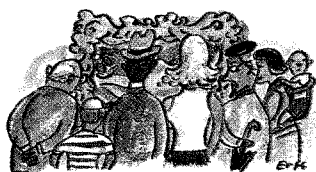
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THE SEPTEMBER ALMANAC

Demographics

September 13: Privacy gets a boost today, as federal regulations restricting the availability of personal information from state motor-vehicle records go into effect. According to the Driver's Privacy Protection Act, access to information such as a driver's name, address, and telephone number will be limited to those seeking it for government, judicial, insurance, or other "legitimate" purposes. In many states this information was obtainable by anyone for a small fee. Those who have availed themselves of it include journalists, marketers, and stalkers. The bill taking effect today is part of the 1994 Violent Crime and Law Enforcement Act; it was prompted in part by the murder of an actress whose killer obtained her address from her record at the California Department of Motor Vehicles.



Arts & Letters

September 28: The first retrospective of the works of the American landscape painter Thomas Moran opens today at the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C. It will include some 100 paintings, among them watercolors of Yellowstone that were instrumental in Congress's decision to make that site the country's first national park. The opening marks the 125th anniversary of the creation of the park. 30: The Pompidou Center, in Paris, closes for two years of renovations. The center, which houses a reference library, a music institute, and a modern-art museum, was intended to receive perhaps 5,000 visitors a day but instead has typically hosted about 25,000 a day—more than the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower combined.

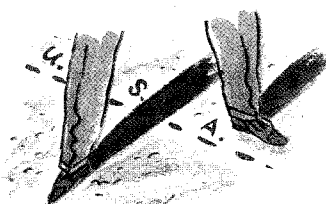


Environment

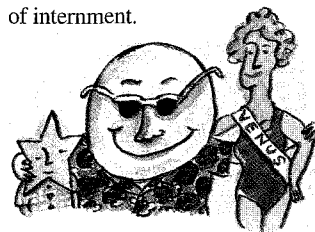
September 1: The 2.2-square-mile ocean dump off the coast of Sandy Hook, New Jersey, which has been the primary repository for some 4 million tons of contaminated mud dredged from New York Harbor each year to keep the harbor open to shipping, closes today by order of the federal government, leaving New York and New Jersey officials in search of other means of disposal. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has proposed 53 options, including burying the mud on land or in underwater pits, but has incurred opposition from environmentalists, who favor decontamination of the mud, a costly and lengthy process. The Army argues that its solutions are environmentally sound and that halting the dredging of the harbor carries its own environmental risks—for instance, oil tankers could run aground in narrow channels, and air pollution results when ships are diverted to other ports and their contents trucked to New York.

Government

According to last year's Immigration Reform Act, immigrants who have been in the United States illegally for more than 180 days as of September 28 and who leave the country are ineligible for re-entry for at least three years. And on September 30 a 1994 law that allowed illegal immigrants to pay \$1,000 to stay here while their applications for legal status were processed is due to expire. Together



these changes amount to a Catch-22: immigrants applying for legal status must go to their native countries for visas allowing them to stay in the United States while their paperwork is processed—but they cannot return for at least three years if they do. Also this month an international tribunal is expected to finish adjudicating compensation claims brought by those who were interned in Nazi concentration camps while they were U.S. citizens. The claims program grew out of an agreement between the German and U.S. governments. According to one estimate, successful claimants may get \$10,000 for each month of internment.

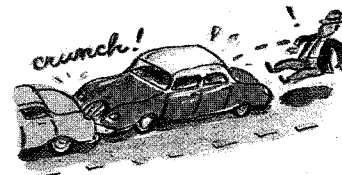


The Skies

The Moon has several partners this month: on September 5 it lies just above Venus and the bright star Spica; on the 6th it lies close to Mars in the early evening; and on the 14th it lies just above Jupiter. September 16: Full Moon, also known this month as the Harvest, Cool, or Black Calves Moon. 21: The waning Moon lies near the reddish star Aldebaran early this morning. 22: At 7:56 P.M. EDT the Autumnal Equinox, marking summer's end.

Health & Safety

Most automobile dealerships will be rolling out 1998 models this month. The cars will incorporate two features required by federal regulations that take effect on September 1: driver's-side and passenger-side airbags in all new passenger cars, and improved locks on the back doors of all new hatchbacks, sport-utility vehicles, minivans, and station wagons. Airbags have been credited with saving some 2,000 lives in the



past decade. However, because they inflate with great force, they have killed roughly 70 people, primarily children and short adults, in low-speed or otherwise low-risk crashes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration now allows lower-powered airbags, and at this writing is considering proposals that would enable consumers to have airbags deactivated. As for the locks on back doors, the need for standards (which have long pertained to side-door locks) was demonstrated by an increasing number of injuries and deaths among unbelted passengers thrown from poorly secured back doors.

100 Years Ago

Woodrow Wilson, writing in the September, 1897, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "[Genuineness] is a quality that goes with good sense and self-respect. . . . Laughter is genuine which has in it neither the shrill, hysterical note of mere excitement nor the hard metallic twang of the cynic's sneer,—which rings in the honest voice of gracious good humor, which is innocent and unsatirical. Speech is genuine which is without silliness, affectation, or pretense. That character is genuine which seems built by nature rather than by convention, which is stuff of independence and of good courage. Nothing spurious . . . nothing adulterated and seeming to be what it is not; nothing unreal, can ever get place among the nobility of things genuine, natural, of pure stock and unmistakable lineage."



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A Civic Duty to Annoy

*We tend to forget that
criticism sometimes expresses greater respect
than praise*

WHAT is there about being in a room filled with people who agree with me that makes me want to change my mind? Maybe it's the self-congratulatory air of consensus among people who consider themselves and one another right-thinking. Maybe it's the consistency of belief that devolves into mere conformity. Maybe it's just that I can no longer bear to hear the word "empower."

At self-consciously feminist gatherings I feel at home in the worst way. I feel the way I do at family dinners, when I want to put my feet up on the table and say something to provoke old Uncle George. To get George going, I defend affirmative action or the capital-gains tax. To irritate my more orthodox feminist colleagues, I disavow any personal guilt about being born white and middle-class. I scoff every time I hear a Harvard student complain that she's oppressed.

I'm not alone in my irreverence, but feminist pieties combined with feminine courtesy keep most of us in line. Radcliffe College, where I am based, is devoted to nurturing female undergraduates. We're supposed to nod sympathetically, in solidarity, when a student speaks of



feeling silenced or invisible because she is female, of color, or both. We're not supposed to point out that Harvard students are among the most privileged people in the universe, regardless of race or sex.

I don't mean to scoff at the discrimination that a young woman of any color may have experienced or is likely to experience someday. I do want to remind her that as a student at Harvard/Radcliffe or any other elite university she enjoys many more advantages than a working-class white male attending a community college. And the kind of discrimination that students are apt to encounter at Harvard—relatively subtle and

occasional—is not “oppression.” It does not systematically deprive people of basic civil rights and liberties and is not generally sanctioned by the administration.

Besides, everyone is bound to feel silenced, invisible, or unappreciated at least once in a while. Imagine how a white male middle

manager feels when he's about to be downsized. Like laments about dysfunctional families, complaints about oppression lose their power when proffered so promiscuously. Melodra-

by Wendy Kaminer

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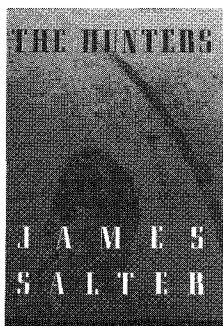
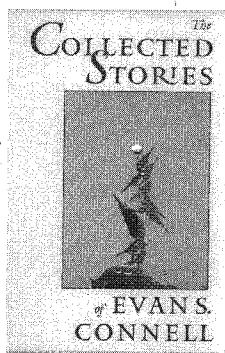


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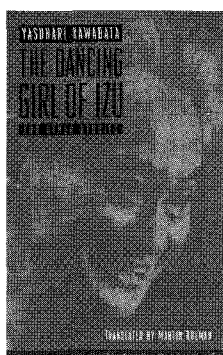
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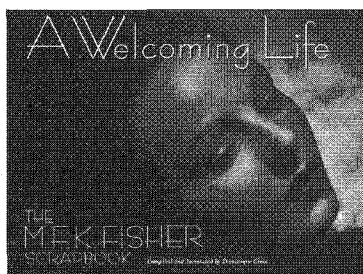
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COUNTERPOINT

matic complaints about oppression at Harvard are in part developmental: students in their late teens and early twenties are apt to place themselves at the center of the universe. But their extreme sensitivity reflects frequently criticized cultural trends as well. An obsession with identity and self-esteem has encouraged students to assume that every insult or slight is motivated by racist, sexist, or heterosexist bias and gravely threatens their well-being. What's lost is a sense of perspective. If attending Harvard is oppression, what was slavery?

Sometimes nurturing students means challenging their complaints instead of satisfying their demands for sympathy. I've heard female students declare that any male classmate who makes derogatory remarks about women online or over the telephone is guilty of sexual harassment and should be punished. What are we teaching them if we agree? That they aren't strong enough to withstand a few puerile sexist jokes that may not even be directed at them? That their male classmates don't have the right to make statements that some women deem offensive? There would be no feminist movement if women never dared to give offense.

When nurturing devolves into pandering, feminism gives way to femininity. Recently a small group of female students called for disciplinary proceedings against males wearing "pornographic" T-shirts in a dining hall. They found it difficult to eat lunch in the presence of such unwholesome, sexist images. Should we encourage these young women to believe that they're fragile creatures, with particularly delicate digestive systems? Should we offer them official protection from T-shirts? Or should we point out that a group of pro-choice students might someday wear shirts emblazoned with words or images that pro-life students find deeply disturbing? Should we teach them that the art of giving and taking offense is an art of citizenship in a free society?

That is not a feminine art. Radcliffe, for example, is an unfailingly polite institution. Criticism and dissatisfaction are apt to be expressed in a feminine mode, covertly or indirectly. It's particularly hard for many of us not to

react with great solicitude to a student who declares herself marginalized, demeaned, or oppressed, even if we harbor doubts about her claim. If she seeks virtue in oppression, as so many do, we seek it in maternalism.

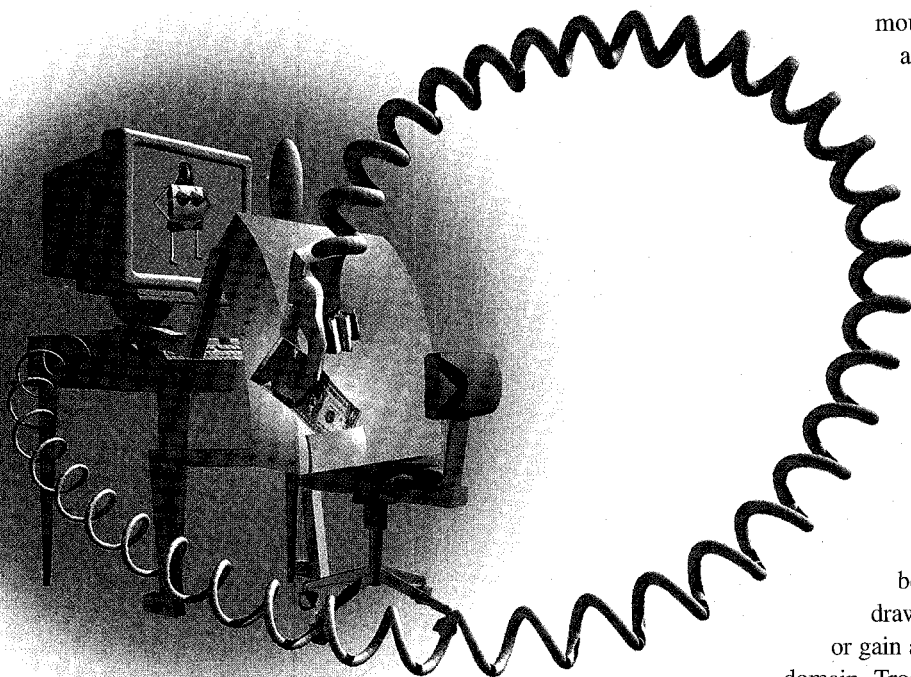
We tend to forget that criticism sometimes expresses greater respect than praise. It is surely more of an honor

*In fact communities
are built on com-
promise, and compro-
mise presupposes
disagreement.*

than flattery. You challenge a student because you consider her capable of learning. You question her premises because you think she's game enough to re-examine them. You do need to take the measure of her self-confidence, and your own. Teaching—or nurturing—requires that you gain students' trust and then risk having them not like you.

Sometimes withholding sympathy feels mean, insensitive, and uncaring; you acquire all the adjectives that aren't supposed to attach to women. You take on the stereotypically masculine vices at a time when the feminine virtue of niceness is being revived: Rosie O'Donnell is the model talk-show host, civility the reigning civic virtue, and communitarianism the paradigmatic political theory. Communities are exalted, as if the typical community were composed solely of people who shared and cared about one another and never engaged in conflict.

In fact communities are built on compromise, and compromise presupposes disagreement. Tolerance presupposes the existence of people and ideas you don't like. It prevails upon you to forswear censoring others but not yourself. One test of tolerance is provocation. When you sit down to dinner with your disagreeable relations, or comrades who bask in their rectitude and compassion, you have a civic duty to annoy them. ☼



moldovascam.com

*A complicated case of
electronic and telephone fraud suggests
just how vulnerable Internet
users may be*

MOLDOVA is a former Soviet republic, a croissant-shaped nation the size of Maryland, surrounded by Ukraine and Romania. It is not, as a friend of mine guessed, the fictitious country in the Marx Brothers movie *Duck Soup*. Yet it figured recently in a scheme as tangled and improbable as anything Prime Minister Rufus T. Firefly of Freedonia might have cooked up—a case involving pornography, the Internet, telecommunications fraud, and a Trojan horse. An examination of the case brings to light some of the perils of our nascent electronic world—a world in which everything from “sites” to telephone calls to countries themselves is sometimes only virtual.

Last December and January, Internet

users might have found themselves, after caroming around cyberspace as their predilections dictated, on Web sites called *sexygirls.com*, *1adult.com*, and *beavisbutthead.com*. Each of these sites promised free “adult” pictures. First, though, would-be voyeurs needed to download a viewer application—a program that would allow them to display the photos on their personal computers. There was nothing especially suspicious about this: Internet devotees routinely download software, from new versions of Netscape’s Web browser to video games such as *Doom* and *Quake* to Budweiser’s Bud Ice screen saver.

This particular program, however, was different. It was what is known infa-

mously in computer circles as a “Trojan horse”—a program that fulfills its stated function while secretly carrying out another. The most common type of Trojan horse, according to Dan Geer, the vice-president of CertCo, an electronic-commerce security firm in New York, is one that records your name and password as you log on to an electronic account and then passes them along to someone else—who might be able to read your E-mail, draw on your checking account, or gain access to some other private domain. Trojan horses are probably not very common: most people would know if they were being stolen from, and most people’s private information is not worth the trouble to steal or the risks involved. Still, no one really knows how prevalent the programs are. As Geer laments, “The computer-security arena is plagued with underreporting.”

In the case involving Moldova, while the downloaded program was providing access to the pornographic photos, a hidden regiment of subcommands was ransacking the user’s computer. First the program ordered the volume on the computer’s speakers turned off, to prevent the usual telephonic sounds a modem makes. Then it hung up the line to which the modem was connected and dialed a number in Moldova. That call was answered by a computer that reconnected the user to the adult site. The promised photos—or at least one of them—finally appeared on the screen. The viewer had no idea that while he was looking at pictures he was paying for a transatlantic phone call.

The assault didn’t end there. Even after the viewer left the site, disappointed with what was often only a single photo, the phone call continued. The Moldovan horse, as it might be called, didn’t allow the modem to hang up even when the customer signed off the Internet—at which point a modem normally would. Only when the computer or the modem itself was shut off did the phone call terminate.

by Marshall Jon Fisher

WHO stood to make money in this scheme? To answer that question we need to look at what happens when a person calls a foreign country. International phone calls involve separate charges levied by each carrier concerned. American customers pay a single fee per call to their long-distance provider—for example, AT&T—and that provider pays the foreign company its share. Phone companies in developing nations are often in dire need of customers. Few of the nations' citizens have phones, and not many calls come in from abroad. So the companies sometimes contract with entrepreneurs in the United States and elsewhere who set up phone-sex lines or other services that require calls to the country. U.S. long-distance rates are governed by the Federal Communications Commission, but for many foreign companies the sky's the limit: they can

*Phone companies
found a big spike in
activity: 800,000
minutes to Moldova in
only six weeks.*

charge enough to cover sizable fees to their partners—the providers of the phone sex or other “audiotext” product—and still make a profit themselves. Pornography needn't be part of the arrangement, but there aren't many better ways to keep people on an expensive phone call.

The involvement of foreign phone companies in teleporn is nothing new, nor is it illegal in itself. “There's a huge business in international pay-per-call sex lines,” says Eileen Harrington, a Federal Trade Commission specialist in telecommunications fraud. One reason is that if a phone-sex service uses a 900 number, as most U.S.-based services do, inadvertent customers can go through a grievance process and are likely to have their charges waived, whereas if a foreign phone company is owed money, the victims are usually held accountable by their own long-distance carriers for the charges. In addition, many people appar-

ently find calls to Haiti, Antigua, or Montserrat easier than 900 numbers to explain to their spouses.

Again, none of this is illegal, so long as advertising clearly discloses the cost of the phone call. There are also at the moment no laws restricting pornography on the Internet, and adult Web sites and newsgroups abound there. What is illegal is deception in commerce, as in a case last fall when people found messages on their pagers or answering machines asking them to call back to learn about job openings or free vacations. The ten-digit numbers looked just like mainland U.S. numbers but in fact were for Guyana, on the northern coast of South America, and some Caribbean islands, where the phone companies charge exorbitant rates. The person who answered would keep the victim on the phone as long as possible, generating a hefty kick-back from the phone company.

International phone scams, then, are old hat; and so are Trojan-horse programs. What's novel about the Moldova case is the harnessing of a Trojan horse to hijack customers' modems and initiate phone fraud. “It combines the worst of two types of fraud,” says Paul Luehr, the FTC's lead trial attorney on the case.

Of course, the scam couldn't go on for long. Members of AT&T's Fraud Control Group and their counterparts at other U.S. long-distance companies, who regularly pore over phone-traffic data looking for unusual spikes in activity, soon found a big one: some 800,000 minutes of phone time to Moldova had accumulated in only six weeks—several orders of magnitude more than usual. And when people found mysterious charges for calls to Moldova on their bills, ranging from \$50 to \$3,000, naturally they complained. The FTC began an intensive investigation in January, breaking down the components of the Trojan-horse program and tracing the registrations of the Web sites involved. Within a month it had shut down the sites and brought suit against the alleged perpetrators, three people on Long Island, in New York. Criminal charges have yet to be filed, but they may well be soon.

The FTC suit specifically seeks to preclude the use of such Trojan horses by invoking Section Five of the FTC Act, which prohibits deceptive acts and practices in commerce. “This is a case that we brought in record time,” Luehr told

me recently. “We really knocked ourselves out putting this thing together, because we realized that it wasn't just pornography customers who could be targeted; this same sort of downloading activity could take place with Mickey Mouse pictures. We wanted to protect the Internet as a viable source of commercial activity.” If a shopping mall acquires a reputation as a pickpockets' hangout, it soon becomes a ghost mall.

THERE is no simple way for people to protect themselves against Trojan-horse attacks. Although some experts I have talked with asserted that an Internet-savvy surfer would not be victimized by such a scheme, others disagreed. “I can easily imagine being fooled by it,” says Alan Albert, a software designer and the inventor of FileMaker Pro, a popular database-management program. “I download files all the time. Some work well, and some have bugs, but in general I assume that they're going to do what they say they'll do.”

If people are aware of an ongoing scam that commandeers modems, they can watch for it; they might even set up their computers to tell them if the modem disconnects. The next scam, however, might not involve the modem. It might be something like what the Chaos Computer Club, a group of defiant hackers in Hamburg, Germany, did earlier this year simply to demonstrate the susceptibility to sabotage of supposed juggernauts like Microsoft. The hackers wrote a Microsoft ActiveX control—a kind of Web program that when someone visits a Web site that uses it, can automatically download itself onto that person's computer, activate, and go to work. In this case the control made a hidden transaction in Quicken, a popular personal-finance program. The next time the person paid his bills online, he would also unknowingly make a payment to the hacker-thieves' account. Microsoft insists that its Web browser, Internet Explorer, will not run unauthorized ActiveX controls without warning the user. And yet the company had to admit that “malicious developers can create malicious executable code,” though it claimed that “this problem exists for all downloaded executable code.” In other words: Come on in, the water's fine—but watch out for those fins.

If the FTC or another policing body

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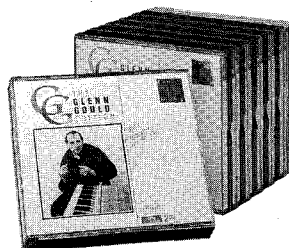
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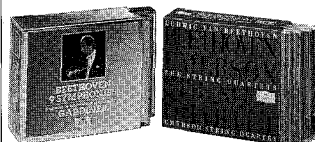
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can uncover a hoax, it can be stopped. Discovery is not always easy, however, when the Internet is involved. In the Moldova case there were smoking phone calls. But in many Internet scams—for example, those in which passwords are stolen—the victims might not ever know they've been victimized. Many Trojan horses even erase themselves after the act—the perfect getaway. And the very nature of the Internet lends itself to camouflage. "There's no 'place' on the Internet," Geer says. "Nowhere to go looking for the culprit."

In the Moldova case the locus of the crime was particularly elusive, because although Moldovan phone numbers had been dialed, no telephones rang there. According to an international agreement, all calls from North America to Moldova go through Canada. These particular calls never got any farther; they

*If the FTC can uncover
a hoax, it can be
stopped. But discovery
is not easy when the
Internet is involved.*

were answered in Scarborough, Ontario, where the computer that reconnected the unwitting customers to the adult site was located. This made no difference to the Moldovan phone company or to the Long Island entrepreneurs to whom it gave kickbacks: people are charged for the number they dial, not for where the call is answered. Moldova in this instance was a virtual nation, no more substantial than any site in cyberspace. Only by tracing the registrations of the offending Web-site programs were the FTC and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police able to track down the actual scene of the crime.

How three people in Long Island were able to divert phone calls in Ontario remains a mystery. For obvious reasons the authorities are circumspect; phone messages I left for the directors of network security at AT&T and Bell Canada were returned by media-relations spokespeo-

ple who professed ignorance. Apparently, though, there is no limit to what a few lines of clever code can accomplish. The personal computer is mightier than the phone company.

Options for consumer defense against Trojan-horse programs are limited. "The only good method," Geer says, "is to make sure you know what software you're running. For the ordinary person this is quite a difficult matter." The great majority of Internet patrons are no more knowledgeable about the architecture of the software they are using than they are about how their microwave ovens work. Therefore, as Web sites increasingly require the downloading of special programs, dependable security is becoming more critical. It's not something that computer companies like to talk about, just as airlines don't tend to advertise that their planes crash less often than the competition's; however, as in airline safety, according to Geer, "there's an implicit competition that's raising the standard."

THERE are two main types of security for downloaded programs. The first requires that companies mark their software with a digital "signature." For instance, as a simplified example, the publisher of this magazine could translate all of its text into digital values, total those up, divide the sum by a particular number, and "stamp" the result on the electronic version of the magazine. If you connected to the magazine's Web site, your browser would check to make sure the signature had the correct value. If a terrorist group tried to add its manifesto as though it had been accepted and published by the editors, then your browser would produce the wrong result when it performed the signature computation, showing that the text had been tampered with.

In the second, or "sandbox," approach, a company instructs its program to remain quarantined in a virtual sandbox maintained by your Web browser in the computer's "back yard." This limits the program to certain specified functions, such as writing on the screen and communicating back to the Web site. It does not permit access to other parts of the yard, where vital programs are located. The Moldovan horse, confined in this way, would have been unable to hang up the modem and redial.

Each approach has strengths and weaknesses; neither is perfect. There will always remain the possibility of a Trojan horse so brilliantly programmed that it can mathematically forge digital signatures, so devious that it can trick your computer into letting it out of the sandbox. In the end, Geer says, "all technology security is about propagating trust." Microsoft favors the signature method, and in doing so what it's really saying is "When you download software with the Microsoft Authenticode signature, you can trust it." This is no different from trusting a car to be safe or dependable. When a person downloads a program written in Java that favors the sandbox strategy, he or she is also expressing trust—trust that the program won't be able to leave the sandbox.

Downloading a program from an unknown Web site is a little like buying a sleeping pill that hasn't been approved by the Food and Drug Administration—or, in some cases, like buying snake oil by the side of a dusty country road. The drug industry, though, relies on a governing body to give it credibility. Internet commerce is just the opposite: its success depends on the existence of millions of independent, largely unregulated vendors.

As we move toward a more fully digital world, the cost of manipulating information approaches zero, and the hazards therein multiply. Even our privacy is in peril. The "clickstream" pouring in to Web merchants—the information that you provide with clicks of your mouse, from your Social Security number to what music you listen to and where you like to eat—lets those merchants personalize their marketing, but it may be more information than you want to share widely. And some Web entrepreneurs collect this information and sell it. Supermarket scan cards may be more convenient than coupons, but, as Geer warns, they, too, "put a market price on privacy." The activities in these examples are perfectly legal, of course, but they increase the potential for electronic malfeasance.

Any new technology can be a constructive or a destructive tool. Trojan horses are simply one of the hazards of the Internet, just as telephone fraud is a hazard of Mr. Bell's invention. To some extent the snake oil will always get through. ☛

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eat a bug?

what if I need x-rays?

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happens on
vacation?

what if?

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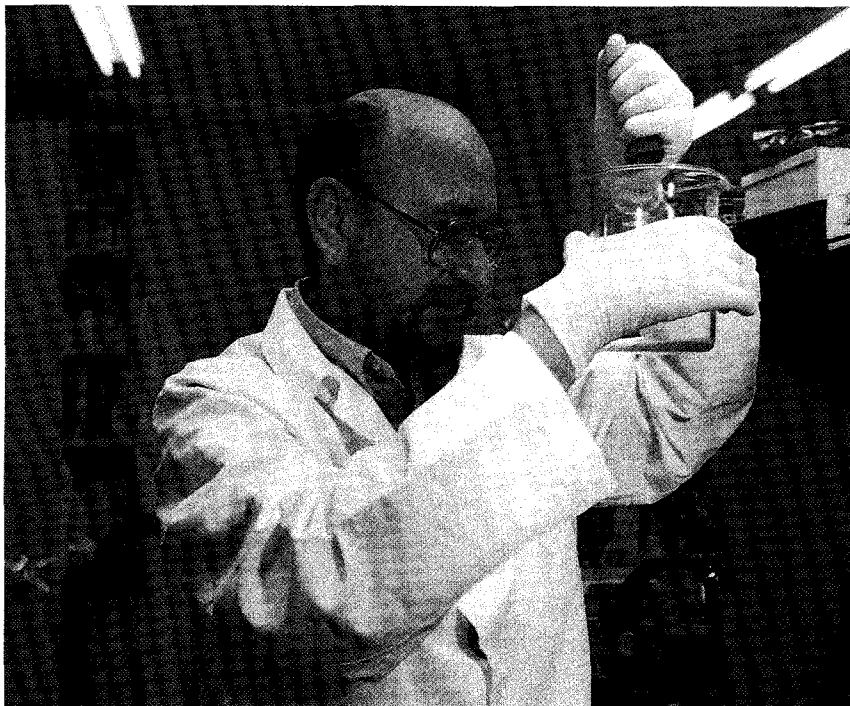


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JOHN FLORENCE

Something in the Water

One man's pursuit of microbial mayhem

THE scientific papers I saw laid out neatly on a table in the office of the microbiologist Charles P. Gerba, all bearing his name as author or co-author, are the very ones that, if it were up to me, would be widely copied and sent as a deterrent to prospective invaders from outer space. "Outbreaks Caused by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Associated With Whirlpool Spas, Hot Tubs, and Swimming Pools." "The Occurrence of Bacteria in Sponges and Dishrags." "Microbial Efficacy of Toilet Bowl Cleaners in Situ and by Laboratory Evaluation." "Efficacy of Iodine Water Purification Tablets Against *Cryptosporidium* Oocysts and *Giardia* Cysts." I looked up when Gerba put down the phone. "So it's actually better to stand there when someone sneezes," he re-

sumed, "than to shake someone's hand. Because you literally pick up infections all the time by just touching surfaces and bringing your fingers to your nose and mouth. There have been experiments where some people come in and play cards, and one of them has a cold and easily transmits it to the other players in the handling of cards, but if you have someone just sit there and watch, he doesn't get the cold. Children—this is one of the reasons why infections spread so rapidly: they're always putting their fingers in their noses and mouths. And they contaminate surfaces very effectively this way. If you go into a day-care center, fifty percent of the toys have rotavirus on them, which is a common cause of diarrhea in children. A small child brings his fingers to his nose

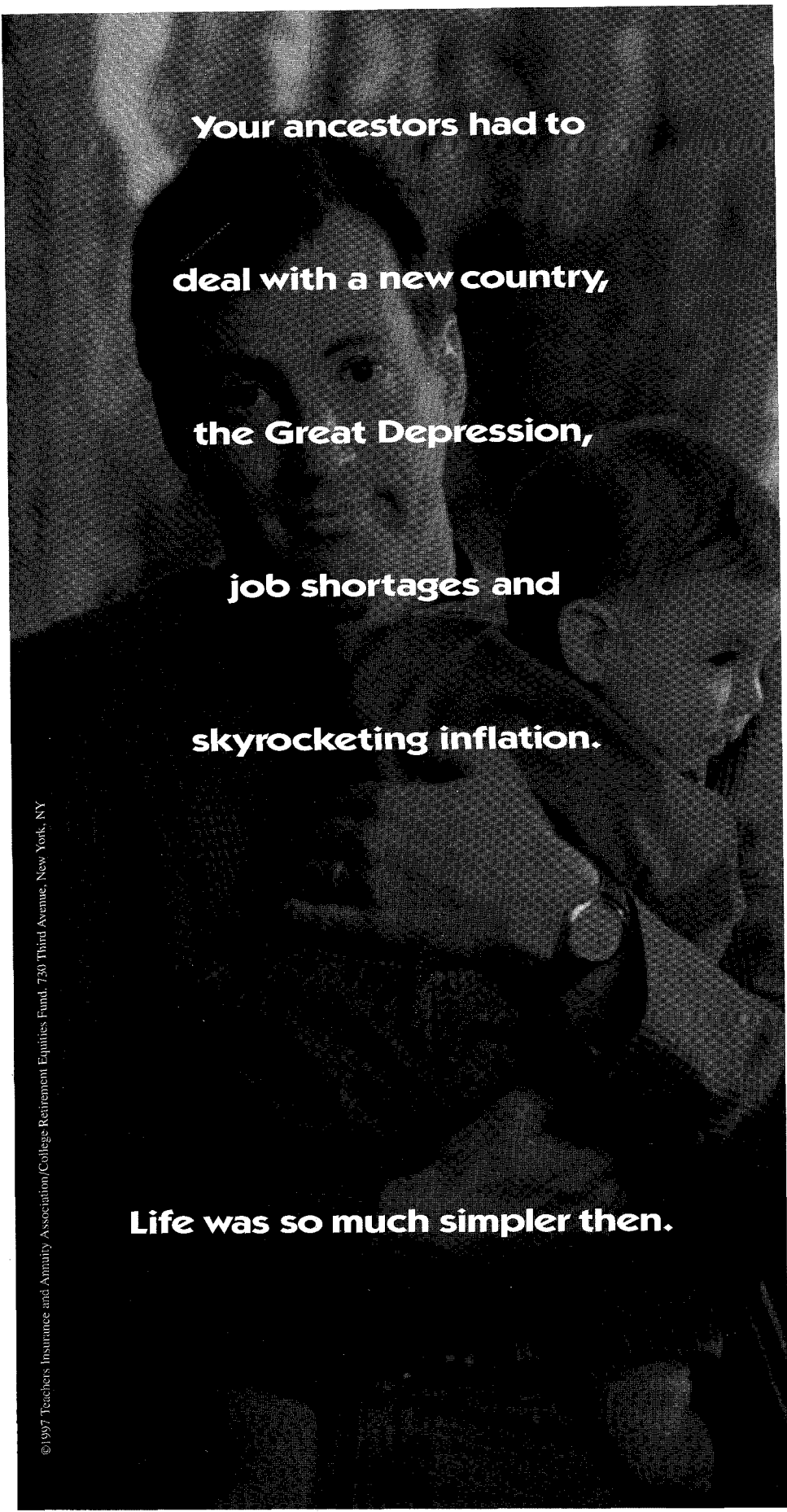
and mouth once every three minutes, and swallows in a day an amount of dirt that would cover six to eight floor tiles. You wonder how we figure that out? What we do is, we know the metal composition of household dust, and we study the kid's stool and figure out how much of that metal is in there."

Charles Gerba looks something like a younger version of the actor Donald Pleasence, and he speaks in a voice that can run on for minutes in a knowledgeable deadpan, with an occasional smart-alecky edge. He is one of America's chief authorities on the microbial transmission of disease—especially transmission by means of water. Based at the University of Arizona, in Tucson, Gerba is among the handful of people who may get a call when public-health authorities somewhere in America or the rest of the world suddenly get a dozen cases of something that looks suspicious—*Salmonella*? *Cryptosporidium*? *Campylobacter*? Rotavirus? *Cyclospora*? *Escherichia coli*?—and need to find out, fast, what it is and where it is coming from.

He has investigated problems with the wastewater-treatment system at the National Science Foundation's McMurdo Station, in Antarctica, and has evaluated the water-recycling systems for the U.S. space program and the Russian MIR space station, where the limitations on volume, weight, and time are severe. ("The issue is how to treat wastewater and get it back quickly so you can drink it. Ideally, you would be able to take a leak and have it right away in your Tang.") Usually, though, Gerba's ventures into microbial-risk assessment, as his field is known, take place closer to home. One might well find him on a given day taking swabs from hotel and motel bathrooms, from picnic tables, from restaurant counters, from office coffee cups, from selected locations inside ordinary houses. He goes door to door collecting sponges and dishrags for analysis, offering people four new ones to replace each old one.

Gerba has written some 400 journal articles on infection and disinfection. His shelves sag under bound volumes of papers, the labels achieving a collective tone of aloof technicality and indeterminate menace. Somewhere among these pa-

by Cullen Murphy



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pers is one called "The Effects of the Discharge of Secondarily Treated Sewage Effluent Into the Everglades Ecosystem"—his first published work, written at the University of Miami, which gave Gerba his doctorate twenty-five years ago. Gerba is married and has two sons. His wife, Peggy, is an arachnologist. His oldest boy's middle name is Escherichia. Gerba told his father-in-law that it was the name of an Old Testament King.

GERBA'S work first came to my attention a few years ago, when I learned about his investigation of the potential pathogenic hazard posed by disposable diapers in municipal landfills (I was writing a book about garbage at the time), a hazard whose seriousness Gerba eventually discounted. When I stopped by his office recently to say hello, the conversation meandered among a variety of issues. Gerba's observations included the following:

- The most germ-infested area in one's home is not the bathroom; it is the kitchen. "The kitchen sink is the arrival zone. You are continually bringing germ organisms in there on your food supply, and they colonize your sink and sponges and rags, and grow by the billions overnight. Ten percent of the dishrags we collect door to door contain *Salmonella*."
- The disinfection of public swimming pools is an issue whose time should come. "The average bather puts in fifty milliliters of urine and about a liter of sweat per hour in active swimming." What about children's wading pools—are they cause for concern? "The chlorine goes so fast with all the kids whizzing in there. We've found potentially disease-causing viruses in every public wading pool we've tested."
- Microbes in space vehicles pose unique challenges. "What do you do if there's a leak in the wastewater system? How do you disinfect it? You can't use chlorine in space—it's too toxic. And what about skin? It flakes off like a powder and after a while becomes a cloud; you need filters to remove it. If we're going to go to Mars, we have to think about this kind of thing."
- Russian astronauts have a few other things to think about first. "They were having problems with microbes causing degradation of materials like leather and wood, which they had used in their space station—can you believe it? Leather and

wood? One thing you don't want is for your space station to degrade."

- Microbially, the best public restrooms are in hospitals. "If you want the cleanest, pull in to the emergency room. Next are your fast-food restaurants, and the worst are airports and bus stations. The more stalls the better, by the way. And the first stall is the safest, because fewer people use it."

- Toilets have an aerosol effect that remains widely unrecognized. "Droplets are going all over the place—it's like the Fourth of July. One way to see this is to put a dye in the toilet, flush it, and then hold a piece of paper over it. You'll get what we call a commode-o-graph. Every toilet has a characteristic . . . well, that's a whole other story."

We strolled for a while around Gerba's laboratories, in a nondescript building that was once used for studies on animal exposure to pathogens; its ventilation system still inhales protectively. One hallway was partly blocked by the equipment that Gerba keeps ready for field expeditions—pumps, filters, sampling devices, sleeping bags. Refrigerators in the laboratories held hundreds of brightly colored translucent petri dishes in which cell cultures were growing. Some were from Gerba's own experiments. Others had been sent by water utilities that were wondering—perhaps after a heavy rain flooded some pasturage near the town well or a sleepy technician back-siphoned a sewer line into a water main—if maybe they had a problem they should be aware of. For the most part bacteria are easily identified by local officials, but many viruses and parasites can be both hard to detect and hard to eliminate. (The parasite *Cryptosporidium*, to which Gerba devotes much effort, is found in a third of all public water systems and has been a particular scourge among AIDS patients.) One laboratory held a shiny washing machine and dryer, for a new study on the fate of fecal/oral organisms in "gray water"—the effluent from appliances and bathtubs. Gerba pointed to a plastic bag on top, containing underwear to be washed. "That's mine," he said. "I've asked all the graduate students to bring theirs in too." In another lab stood a trio of commercial water-purification devices, the freshly processed water percolating into clear blue plastic tubs. Gerba's young technicians were testing the manufacturer's claim that the system

would remove dangerous pathogens. I asked one technician what she had put into the water to test the system. She replied, "Cholera." Another technician said, "Tomorrow we'll hit it with polio."

BACK in his office Gerba explained that run-of-the-mill household transmission of ordinary disease is a problem that will come increasingly to the fore, and that microbial-risk assessment will increasingly become part of our lives. One reason is the food supply. More and more produce is imported, and the water used to grow it is often heavily contaminated. A second, more significant, reason is demographic. "If you look at the general population," Gerba said, "maybe only one in a thousand who are infected will die from an *E. coli* infection. If you look at the elderly, one in ten who are infected may die from it. Of course, the elderly population is increasing. We also have many more immunocompromised people—not just people with AIDS but also cancer patients receiving chemotherapy, a million of them. Hospital stays in general are getting shorter—they want to get you out before you get an infection, actually. And they put you back into an environment where there are a lot of organisms that can take advantage of you. Throw in pregnant women, neonates, people on heavy antibiotic therapy, diabetes patients—already we're up to a fifth of the U.S. population. And we're discovering more and more pathogens all the time, and giving them more opportunities. *Legionella* becomes capable of causing disease only when it grows at high temperatures, above twenty degrees centigrade. It was a nonproblem until we had hot tubs and cooling towers.

"Microbes have crept up the list. They are now the third leading cause of death in the United States. In 1980 they were the fifth. Sometime in the next century they will be on top."

Before I left his office, Gerba gave me some bags of bacteria-resistant sponges and some flasks of kitchen disinfectant—primitive yet effective talismans that can ward off much evil. They cannot quite ward off the memory of a verse from Chronicles: "For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us." The words were spoken by Jehoshaphat—another of those Old Testament Kings. ☼

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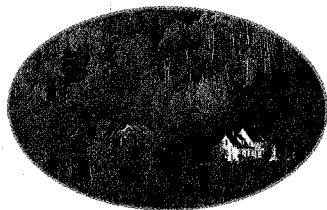
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Peeping in Peace

Not only New England has fall foliage worth traveling to see—Canada's uncrowded Maritime Provinces do too

WHEN my mother came from Arizona to visit me in Boston two Octobers ago, my husband and I took her on some little drives in the countryside. Each time we passed a tree whose leaves had turned bright red or yellow, she would—uncharacteristically—exclaim in delight

by Barbara Wallraff

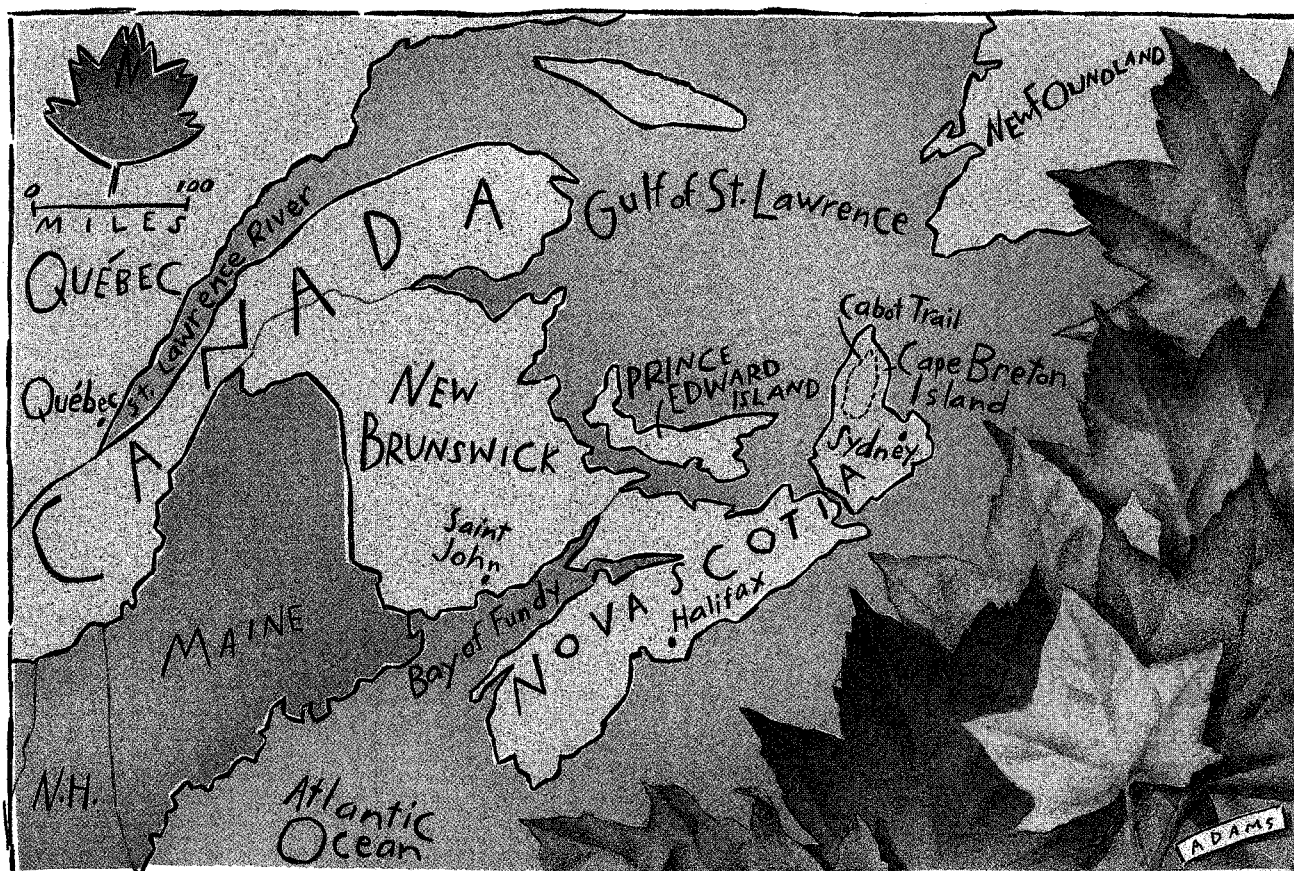
or even emit a little sigh of pleasure. We who live in New England may be more attuned than she to the imperfections in our foliage season. On peak weekends the scenic roads are likely to be as heavily trafficked as any urban freeway, rooms in cozy inns and tables at good restaurants will have been

snapped up long before we thought to make plans, and prices for whatever scraps are left will be high.

Even New Englanders might prefer to go leaf-peeping, as the experience is known, in Canada's Maritime Provinces. Indeed, a few New Englanders do go, and last year my husband and I were among them. We found our fellow tourists to be sparse and hotel reservations easy to come by. We found that food and lodgings cost perhaps a third less than they would have near home, for the U.S. dollar was (and is) strong. And though differences in the composition of the forests of New England and the Maritimes mean the two regions don't give the identical effect, we found that the foliage—tucked into villages or arrayed between quaint farms or splashed across hillsides—was every bit as magnificent as New England's. A red maple leaf is Canada's national symbol for good reason.

Planning a vacation around viewing foliage is, unfortunately, a bit like planning a train trip without a timetable. If you can't expect your timing to be perfect

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN SYLVESTER





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(and how can you?), it's better to be a little early than a little late—in this case because green trees are more attractive than bare branches. Curiously, a number of Canadians in the parts of the Maritimes we visited—Nova Scotia's Cabot Trail, coastal and south-central New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island—insisted that the foliage would be at its peak at their Thanksgiving time, which is our Columbus Day weekend, around October 12. I even heard this maxim last October 6, while standing on a hillside where the leaves were already the color of toast and dropping to the ground. It was a good thing these locals were wrong. Our trip had been planned for the last days of September and the first week of October by the provincial tourist boards, which served as our hosts, and it was timed just about right, give or take a few days.

If it hadn't been, or if the weather had been less agreeable than it was (on average some rain falls about one day out of three in the autumn in the Maritimes, a proportion of rainy days similar to that in New England), not all would have been lost. Visitors to this part of the world can indulge a taste for salmon fishing, fine crafts, traditional folk music, golf, whale watching, or Acadian or Scottish culture. There are impressive historical attractions, such as Nova Scotia's Fortress of Louisbourg reconstruction and, in New Brunswick, the King's Landing settlement. The birdwatching is excellent too: the region is awash in blue herons, and bald eagles are frequently seen. A well-planned foliage trip will take much the same form as a trip undertaken just to get to know the region, because leaf-peepers need destinations to look forward to during and after their forays to see the trees.

ONE destination I could happily visit often is the Cabot Trail, a 186-mile circular drive on Cape Breton Island, in northeastern Nova Scotia. The best-known and oldest of five scenic drives on the island, the Cabot Trail, which was laid out as a gravel road in the 1930s and was paved in its entirety by the 1960s, is

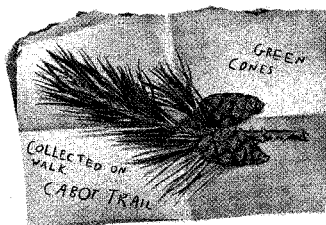
spectacular in the summer, too. With its views of steep rocky headlands falling away beneath wooded hillsides, the trail reminded me of California's Highway One, only with black-and-white-painted churches instead of the Esalen Institute, and sturdy fishermen instead of Henry

Miller and Jack Kerouac. (In fact Alan Arkin and Philip Glass, among other celebrities, have houses along the coast south of the trail.)

You get there by flying to Halifax and then making an hour-long hop in a smaller plane to Sydney, renting a car, and lighting out. The Cabot Trail and environs are worth devoting three or four days to. This will give you time to wait out a day or so of bad weather, if need be, and also time to do some looking around off the trail—preferably off all five of the scenic drives. As local people will tell you (and here they'll be right), some of the best foliage viewing is on dirt roads or roads that require you to double back, and no such roads were allowed to be part of the drives.

But first the Cabot Trail itself. An issue regularly deliberated is clockwise or not? Every guidebook with an opinion recommends clockwise, apparently on the theory that the cliffside portions of the route might terrify someone who has to drive in the outside lane. We went counterclockwise, and were unterrified and happy with the pace of the scenery in our direction. From Sydney we reached the Keltic Lodge, in Cape Breton Highlands National Park, by midday. An old-fashioned, stately hotel high up on a spit of land between two bays, with hundreds of small mulioned windows through which to see the handsome views, the Keltic Lodge is adjacent to a renowned golf course and has a good dining room. It is a lovely place to have lunch and take a walk down to the point to admire the blazing color or, better, to stop for a night or two.

Driving on through the park, we arrived at various oceanside beauty spots where the scenery, made up largely of evergreens, lichen-dappled rocks, and blue sea, looked just as it would have at

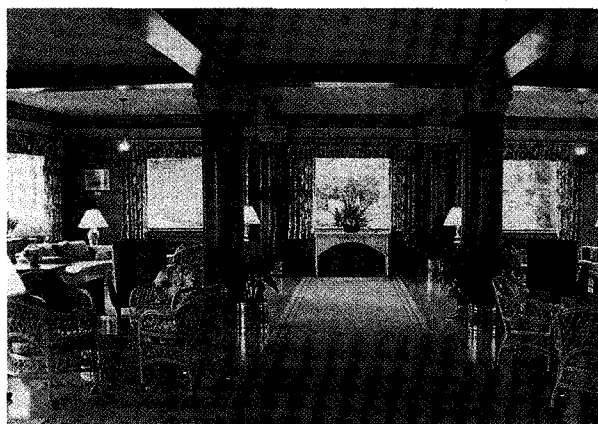


the height of summer. A bit farther on, the primarily deciduous forest we had come to see returned. Before and after this trip I took part in a few debates about whether it's nice to have some evergreens in the forest where one is leaf-peeping. Previously I had said, Who needs them? But Canada proved to me that red, orange, and yellow trees look jauntier and brighter where they are set off with a touch of green.

Almost exactly halfway around the trail from the Keltic Lodge we turned off to thread our way through a cluster of picture-perfect villages in the Margaree Valley. Fog had settled into the hollows, lending an eerie Halloween glow to the trees. Soon we reached the Normaway Inn, a rustic sprawl of rooms and cabins reminiscent of a camp that has been in the hands of a well-to-do family for generations. Down the hall from the front desk, in the opposite direction from the pleasant restaurant, is a living room with a big fireplace, board games and card tables, comfortable sofas and chairs, and teetering stacks of magazines. The staff will bring you wine or any of half a doz-

The Keltic Lodge, in Cape Breton Highlands National Park

WARREN GORDON



en or so good Scotches as you while away the time before or after dinner. After our pleasant dinner we wandered out into the crisp night and over to the barn, where a folk band was holding forth to great acclaim.

Once the performance was over, we turned in, and how we slept—how we slept throughout our trip! In the Maritimes we slept soundly, dreamlessly, all night long, beside ocean bays, beside rivers, beside fields of woolly Highland cattle. We slept as if we had a talent

for it, except at the occasional bed-and-breakfast that made us nervous. Sometimes B&B proprietors seem to think that the core of their job is not providing hospitality but doing the place up like a museum of knickknacks. Eek! There's no place to put your things, and while the owners have been focusing on appearances, they've forgotten to replace the mattress.

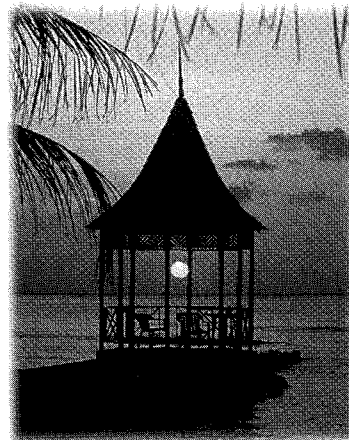
Nonetheless, the Maritimes are chockablock with simple, hospitable B&Bs and clean, quiet motels and cabins (some of these—beware—shut down at the end of September). An agency called Canada Select rates tourist accommodations on a five-star scale. Though it does not appear to deduct points for clutter on the tabletops, it is otherwise quite strict and accurate, so visitors will have a good idea in advance how plain or deluxe a given hostelry is. (For tourist information of all kinds about the Maritimes, call 800-565-2627.) The Keltic Lodge (902-285-2880), which is a four-star establishment, and the Normaway Inn (800-565-9463), which has chosen to be unrated in recent years, number among the nicest places to stay on Cape Breton, and their rates for two start at, respectively, around \$190 U.S. a night, including breakfast

and dinner, and \$80 a night, including breakfast. To seek out other special places I would begin by consulting an annual guide called *Where to Eat in Canada* (published in this country by the Harvard Common Press), which also lists a few favorite inns, or the widely available *Fodor's Canada*, which I

thought gave the soundest advice of any general guidebook.

FROM here you could go on to discover other parts of Nova Scotia. Or you could see a bit of New Brunswick, where last year the leaves were a few days behind Cape Breton's. I would begin by flying to the old port city of Saint John and pausing for a day or so there. Saint John's historic district, which was largely built during the prosperous shipbuilding times of a century

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and more ago, is fun to poke around in. So is the omnibus New Brunswick Museum at Market Square, which has well-mounted displays of everything from whale skeletons to antique timbering tools to contemporary craft work. Furthermore, Saint John is home to the Reversing Falls, where, depending on the tide level in the Bay of Fundy, water rushes into or out of the Saint John River. New Brunswick has more than its share of gee-whiz attractions, such as the world's largest ax and a supposedly magnetic hill that is said to pull cars up it, against gravity.

From Saint John I'd drive the sixty miles southwest to St. Andrews, and settle in for a few nights. The drive itself is pretty, combining ocean and foliage views. And St. Andrews is a very posh little seaside town: on its shopping street you'll find French faience pottery and thousand-dollar vests made in Scotland of pheasant feathers. There's a fine golf course at the Algonquin Hotel and an ambitious botanical work in progress in the Kingsbrae Horticultural Garden, which will open to the public next year. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's vacation home on Campobello Island is within reach, and out in the bay is Minister's Island, where you can tour the mansion that a century ago was the home of William Cornelius Van Horne, the builder and later the chairman of Canadian Pacific Railways. Part of the fun of an excursion to Minister's Island is that it's accessible only at low tide: you rendezvous at the end of a road and drive in convoy behind your guide across tidal flats where great blue herons, gulls, and people are busy scrounging up a seafood dinner.

Within four hours or so you'd better be out of there (you will be), or else you'll have to wait half a day to return.

But all these things are really just excuses to come stay at the extraordinary Kingsbrae Arms, which when it opened last year became the first inn to receive Canada Select's five-star rating. Adjacent to the Kingsbrae Horticultural Garden, the inn's hundred-year-old building presents a severe façade of vertical gray cedar shingles and shuttered windows.

But the inn has a garden of its own around back, and the interior has been decorated so avidly, so *intensely*, with pillows and patterns and fabrics and fringes and marble and gleaming wood, that a guest seems to have wandered into some Maritime Shangri-La, friendly Lhasa apsos and all. There's plenty of room for your things: in fact, to make sure there would be, the owners, Harry Chancey Jr. and David Oxford, commissioned mahogany armoires from a local craftsman. In the sitting room there's a bar where you can pour yourself a warming glass of sherry or what-have-you after your rambles, and upstairs there's a pantry full of complimentary snacks to raid at will. Chancey and Oxford have refined their interior-design and guest-pampering skills over almost a decade of owning and operating Centennial House, in East Hampton, New York. They and their staff cook breakfast for everyone, and elegant lunches and dinners on request. Rates at Kingsbrae Arms start at about \$125 U.S. for two, including breakfast; call 506-529-1897.

OR you could visit Prince Edward Island, the most dreamlike of Canada's provinces. Now that the Confederation Bridge links PEI to the mainland (it opened this past June), the island seems ready to awaken and join the twentieth century—just in time for the twenty-first. Many residents and loyal

repeat visitors are fearful of this new development, and insist they'd rather dream on. But unless you're a fan of Anne of Green Gables, or of goofy children's attractions such as a park full of miniature renditions of

the Taj Mahal, the Eiffel Tower, and so on, there isn't much to do on PEI except visit the gorgeous pink-sand beaches, drive around, and gawp at the busloads of giggling young Japanese women in flounced petticoats and calico who *are* Anne of Green Gables fans. As the fall

progresses, the beaches become less appealing—but the scenery becomes more so. The still-green fields fill up with big round bales of hay, and the vines, shrubs, and trees grow ruddy like the beaches and the fertile red-clay soil.

What would draw me back to PEI, too, is a terrific inn. The Inn at Bay Fortune was established eight years ago in what had been the summer home of the late actress Colleen Dewhurst, on forty-six bucolic acres by the sea. This was

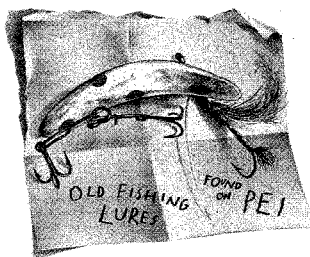


JACK LECLAIR

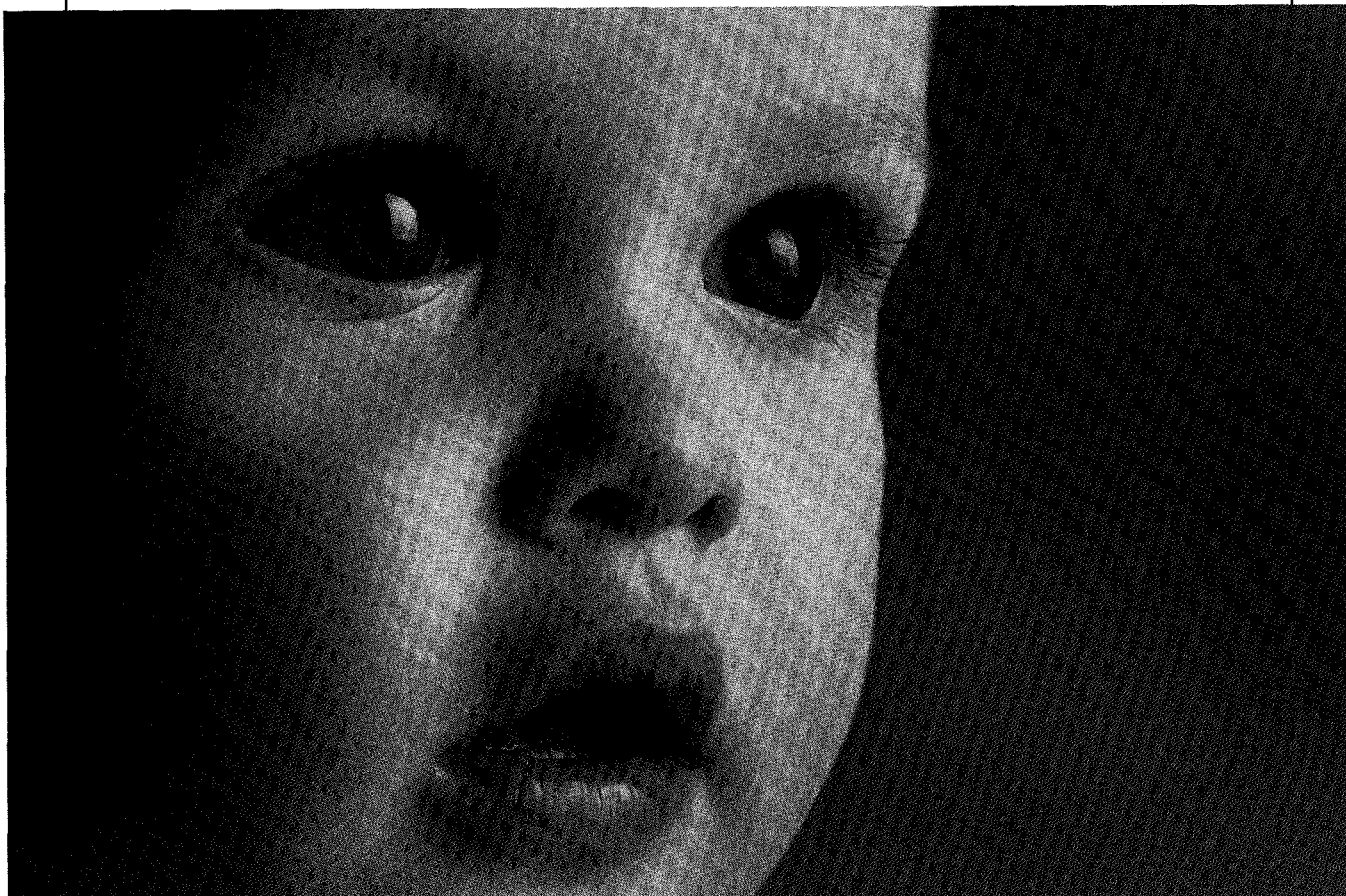
The Inn at Bay Fortune, on Prince Edward Island

once at the heart of an artists' colony, and the inn's owner, David Wilmer, hopes that one day it will be again. For now the special feature is the dining room, serving innovative food such as spice-crusted PEI bluefin tuna and roast-venison-and-emu stew. After some days in the Maritimes, where generally you'll get a good dinner as long as you order lobster, mussels, or salmon and refuse any offer of sauces, it will be obvious to you that this dining room is worth driving forty-five miles from Charlottetown to reach. Unlike most of the restaurants we visited, the Inn at Bay Fortune's was full of people—and when being someplace bustling made me happy, I realized what a long psychological distance I'd come from New England. The rooms in the inn are very sweet, with fireplaces and fires laid in them, awaiting just a match. Here rates start at about \$90 a night for two, including breakfast; in season call 902-687-3745.

Then again, you could continue your trip by wending your way slowly south to New England, following the turning of the leaves. But why would you want to do that? ☼



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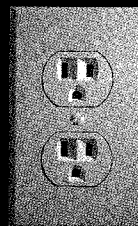
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A GRIEF LIKE NO OTHER

by ERIC SCHLOSSER

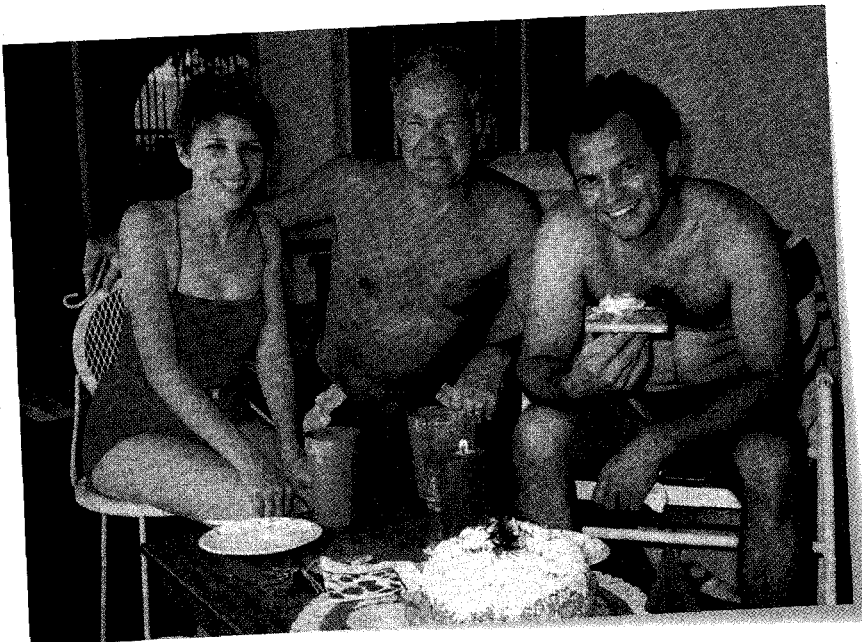
*Americans are fascinated by
murders and murderers but not by the families
of the people who are killed—an amazingly
numerous group, whose members can turn only to one
another for sympathy and
understanding*

ON the first Friday evening of every month thirty to forty men and women gather at Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Kansas City, Missouri. They meet in the parish hall, a low modern building not far from the headquarters of the Hallmark Cards corporation. They bring cookies and sodas, newsletters, notebooks, and photographs of their children. They sit in folding chairs around two large banquet tables. They are white, African-American, and Latino, middle-class and working-class, a cross-section of midwesterners. From all appearances this could be a session of the local PTA

or of a church group planning its next book fair. The meeting opens with everybody explaining, one by one, why he or she has come. Each story seems more poignant and more horrific than the last. This is the monthly gathering of Parents of Murdered Children, Kansas City chapter, a support group for the relatives and friends of homicide victims. A hand-stitched quilt on the wall has the photographic image of a different face in every square—mostly young men and women, innocent, full of promise, unaware of their impending fate. The quilt seems as American in its own way as the violence that brought these families to this room.

The fear of murder has grown so enormous in the United

States that it leaves a taint, like the mark of Cain, on every one murder touches. One might expect that the families of murder victims would be showered with sympathy and support, embraced by their communities. But in reality they are far more likely to feel isolated, fearful, and ashamed, overwhelmed by grief and guilt, angry at the criminal-justice system, and shunned by their old friends. America's fascination with murder has not yet extended to its aftermath. As a result, the victims' survivors must seek comfort from one another. Throughout the country hundreds of support groups like the one in Kansas City meet every month. The amount of bloodshed in the United States is difficult to comprehend,



**ROBERT KRAHN (RIGHT),
SHOT TO DEATH AT AGE 40,
PHOENIX, ARIZONA, 1996**

like the carnage of a shadowy, undeclared civil war. During the past two decades nearly half a million Americans have been murdered, and an additional 2.5 million have been wounded by gunfire—more casualties than the U.S. military has suffered in all the wars of the past 200 years.

The murder rate in the United States (the number of people killed each year per 100,000) has been declining since 1993, most dramatically in New York City. Nevertheless, it is still extraordinarily high compared with the rate in Western Europe or even in the United States of just a generation ago. After years of diminishing violence in the 1950s, a murder wave began to engulf the United States around 1960. By the late 1970s the U.S. murder rate had doubled, reaching an all-time high in 1980. Since then it has fallen slightly, climbed a bit, and dropped again. The U.S. murder rate today is roughly the same as it was in 1989—eight homicides per 100,000. About 70 percent of the murders in America are committed with a firearm. About 90 percent are committed by men. The murder rate among men of all ages in the United States is approximately five times as high as the rate among men in Canada, eleven times as high as the rate among men in Germany, and twenty times as high as the rate among men in Ireland or Japan. The murder rate among young men in the United States, aged fifteen to twenty-four, has roughly tripled since 1960. It is now about thirty-five times as high as the murder rate among men of the same age in England.

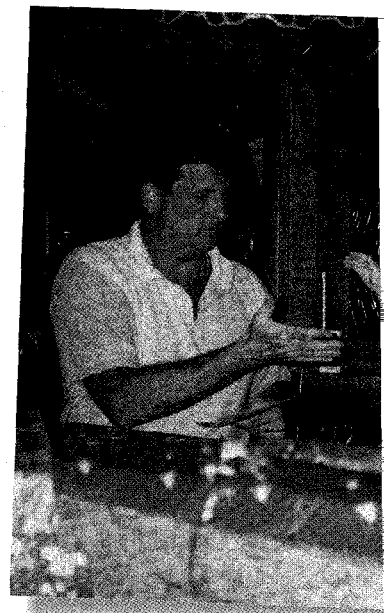
The increase in the U.S. murder rate has been accompanied over the past few decades by a rising incidence of crimes once considered rare. Mass murders, serial murders, and murders committed by strangers have become more commonplace. A mass murderer kills a number of victims at one time and often then commits suicide. A serial murderer

kills a number of victims over an extended period and tries to avoid capture. After studying old newspaper articles and police reports, Ronald M. Holmes, a professor of justice administration at the University of Louisville, concluded that there were fewer than twenty mass murders in the United States from 1950 to 1960. Holmes says that three or four mass murders are now committed every month. Eric W. Hickey is a professor of criminology at California State University at Fresno, and an expert on serial murder. According to his count, there were about nineteen serial killers in the United States during the 1950s—and about 114 during

the 1980s. Various estimates place the number of serial killers at large in the United States today at thirty-five to 200.

Instead of producing widespread revulsion toward violence, or mass demonstrations, or an “anti-war” movement against the daily slaughter, America’s murder rate has inspired an altogether different response: a culture of murder, with the murderer at its core. Edgar Allan Poe invented the detective story more than 150 years ago, with the publication of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” and tabloids have always relied on crime stories to lure readers. But only in recent years has the serial killer become a national icon, endlessly portrayed in movies, books, and popular music. The first mainstream Hollywood “slasher” film, Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, was released in 1960, as America’s murder rate began to climb. Six years later *In Cold Blood*, Truman Capote’s nonfiction tale of murder, was published to great acclaim. Both works were inspired by real murderers; both created whole new genres; and both continue to be widely imitated by lesser talents. The slasher film and the nonfiction murder tale share a fundamental premise: the killer is the protagonist.

**JAMIE COOKSEY (SECOND
FROM RIGHT), RAPED
AND STRANGLED AT AGE 14,
BROOKLYN PARK, MINNESOTA,
1990**



Since 1966 hundreds of books have been published that follow murderers along their paths of destruction. Every serial killer, it seems, now has a biographer or two. And yet just a handful of books have looked at murder from the victim's perspective. Slasher films are even less likely than their literary counterparts to address the plight of the victim. Indeed, a slasher film's plot, characterization, and internal logic are far less important to the audience than the methods and choreography of its murders. Comedy plays a large role in the genre, with humorous crime-scene details and serial killers tossing off one-liners.

Even academic elites are drawn to the figure of the murderer, which has long been a focus of attention for psychiatrists, sociologists, and criminologists. A vast amount of research has been conducted on murderers in order to predict their violent behavior, understand their social context, restrain them, rehabilitate them, and promote their moral and spiritual reform. During the past twenty-five years hundreds of articles in psychiatric journals have examined the homicidal mind. Fewer than a dozen have explored how a homicide affects the victim's family.

In a study of murder in Romantic literature the theater scholar Laurence Senelick used a phrase, "the prestige of evil," that goes a long way toward explaining why our culture has become obsessed with the murderer while ignoring the victim. The murderer is a powerful figure who dares to violate the central tenet of almost every human society: Thou shalt not kill. "There's no greater feeling of power on earth," a former gang member once confided, "than what it feels like to take another person's life." Most serial killers are impelled by a craving for power, by a desire for the sort of control over life and death that is usually attributed to God. When the murderer is the protagonist of a story, we can vicariously experience that power. The victim is a defeated

soul, a loser in this contest of strength. Perhaps it is easier to identify with the murderer. To do otherwise means choosing the side of the powerless—and confronting some unsettling truths.

Almost twenty years ago Lucy N. Friedman, the director of the Victim Services Agency, in New York City, helped to organize one of the nation's first support groups for the families of murder victims. Friedman says that the

survivors of murder victims are often treated like pariahs, avoided like a source of bad luck. They feel cursed. Even the counselors who work with survivors come to feel stigmatized by their jobs. What they have learned contradicts the way the rest of us would like to view the world. We want to maintain an illusion of safety, Friedman says; we want to believe that the children of good parents will never be harmed. Our refusal to acknowledge the plight of murder victims and their survivors is a dangerous form of denial—a flight from



reality that allows lethal violence to flourish.

**FRED BERGFORD, KILLED
IN A MASS SHOOTING
AT AGE 28,
EL PASO, TEXAS, 1980**

More than anything else, the relatives of murder victims need to be heard. The stories of a few survivors in Kansas City give a sense of what murder in America really is and what it does. Kansas City is by no means the murder capital of the USA. It is a midsize city in the middle of the country with a level of violence comparable to that of many other urban areas. The aftermath of homicide in Kansas City is emblematic of what ordinary men and women are experiencing every day throughout the United States. A culture of murder now surrounds us, like a dark, poisonous fog. By looking at the victims of murder and listening to their survivors, we may find a way out.

A KILLING

WHEN Harriett Smith was born, her family lived in a granary. The year was 1929, and her father was a tenant farmer who grew winter wheat on a series of small farms in western and central Kansas. Harriett had twelve brothers and sisters, all of them healthy and strong. Her family was Catholic, and treated like second-class citizens wherever they settled. Every few years her parents



loaded their children and their farm animals into cars and trucks and moved to new land. Harriett grew up outside small towns like Washington, Morrowville, and Linn, amid rolling green hills and beautiful old trees. None of the houses her father rented had central heating, indoor plumbing, or electricity. When Harriett turned twelve, she was sent off to live with another family and work as a hired girl. One day she overheard her employer say that girls like Harriett were "good for nothing besides making babies for the Pope." From then on Harriett was determined not to remain a servant all her life. She became one of the first in her family to go to high school.

While attending a nursing college in Lincoln, Nebraska, Harriett began to date a young man named Albert Smith. Harriett was small and sturdy; Al was tall and boisterous. He had grown up with five siblings on a truck farm in South Dakota, also without central heating, running water, or electricity. Al was the son of a laborer who dug basements with a pick and shovel, year-round, for a flat fee of \$24, and later worked as a railroad engineer. After serving in the Army during the Second World War and losing a brother at the Battle of the Bulge, Al expected to become a laborer like his father. Instead the G.I. Bill paid his tuition at the University of Nebraska, where he majored in business administration. Al and Harriett got married and moved to Kansas City after graduation. They bought a house in a brand-new subdivision rising from farmland south of town. Al wound up working for the Bendix Corporation, eventually becoming a superintendent in a plant that made components for nuclear warheads. Harriett worked as an elementary school nurse. The couple had five children—three boys and two girls. Although Al and Harriett had faced many hardships in their youth, neither had witnessed any violent crime or had ever lived in fear of it. In their middle-class neighborhood, with its modest houses and its campers parked in driveways, what violence there was occurred in secret, within a family, behind closed doors.

On Christmas Day in 1986 Harriett prepared a big family dinner for their children and grandchildren, nineteen people in all. A week and a half later their daughter Terri turned twenty-three and their other daughter, Kathryn, turned thirty-one. Terri was the secretary to a dean at DeVry Institute of Technology; Kathryn worked at the post office. On Monday, January 19, 1987, Terri's boss called the Smiths to say that Terri hadn't shown up for work that day, and that nobody answered the phone at her house. Terri was reliable and conscientious; it was unlike her to miss work and not call. Harriett phoned Kathryn, who lived just a block from her sister. Kathryn walked over to Terri's house. The doors were locked, the curtains were drawn, and Terri's Plymouth was in the driveway, still covered with the weekend's snow. Al

dropped by the house after work and found it dark. He left a note on the door.

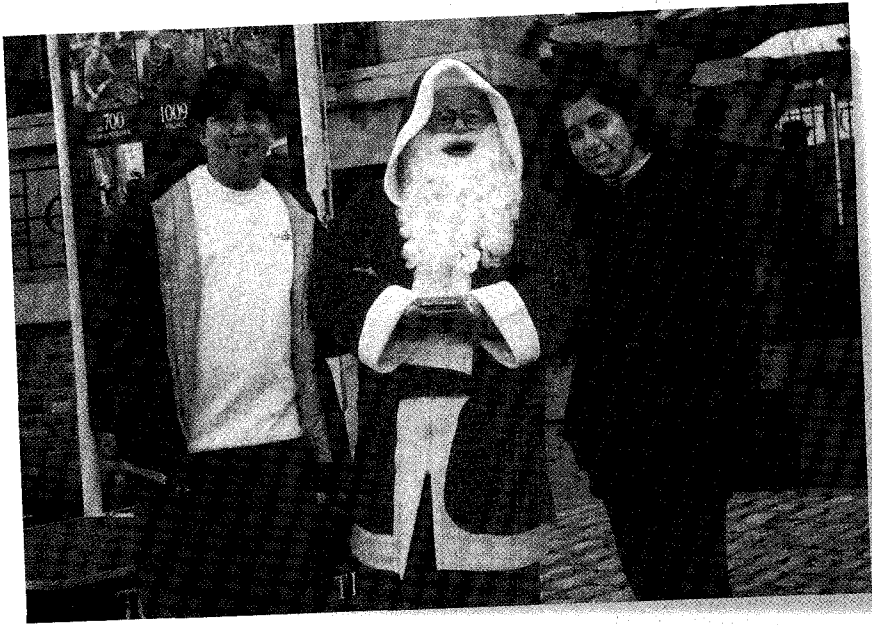
Al and Harriett had spent most of Saturday with Terri. She had come over to do her laundry, and they had enjoyed a lazy day, chatting and watching television. Terri was their youngest child, the little girl who was going to keep them young forever. She was warm and nurturing but strong-willed—just like her mother. She phoned her parents at least once a day, always with the same greeting: "Hi, it's me." She lived in a rented house a few blocks away. On Saturday, Terri had mentioned having some problems with her live-in boyfriend, Gary Rawlings Jr. He seemed depressed lately; the two weren't getting along, and she was thinking of moving out. Rawlings was shy, handsome, and intelligent, five years older than Terri, a carpenter and the son of a local bank executive. Al and Harriett liked him a great deal, thought he was a real gentleman. Rawlings had been at their Christmas dinner and told the Smiths afterward that it was his best Christmas in years. Harriett tried hard not to worry. She wondered if Terri and Rawlings had eloped.

Monday night Harriett worked the late shift; she was now a nurse in the cardiology ward of a local hospital. Tuesday morning Al's note was still stuck to Terri's door, and there were no fresh tracks in the snow around her house. Al called the police. An officer met the Smiths at Terri's house. While Harriett used a neighbor's phone to call the landlord for a key, the policeman removed a storm window and climbed into Terri's living room. He looked around the house. There were dirty dishes in the sink and on the kitchen counter. Two baskets of clean laundry sat in the hall. Bills and papers were scattered on a small desk in one room. In another the officer found Terri lying face down in bed, under a pile of blankets and a flowered quilt, shot once in the back of the head. A spent 9mm casing was on the bedside table. Terri's right arm extended from the bed, as though she were asleep.

As homicide detectives searched for Gary Rawlings, a different picture of the young man emerged. Terri's friends and co-workers told the police that Rawlings had been acting strangely over the past few weeks. He had also been physically abusing Terri. During a recent fight he had thrown a knife that barely missed her and stuck in the wall. Terri had spoken about his hostile behavior with reluctance. She was by all accounts a lovely person, protective of her boyfriend. She was planning to break up with Rawlings, but she was afraid of him. Terri had never revealed the physical abuse to her parents or to her sister.

Gary Rawlings Sr. told detectives that his son had a history of mental problems and had suffered a nervous breakdown three years earlier, when his parents split up. The young man was married at the time and had two small chil-

AMERICA'S MURDER RATE HAS INSPIRED A CULTURE



MARCOS DE LA CRUZ-CODY
(LEFT), SHOT TO DEATH
AT AGE 17, COMPTON,
CALIFORNIA, 1996

dren. He claimed to have developed clairvoyant powers. He said that airplanes were flying over him and taking pictures, that cartoons and comic strips were making fun of him, that people were following him and trying to control his mind. Rawlings was admitted to the psychiatric ward at the Shawnee Mission Medical Center, in Overland Park, Kansas, suffering from depression and paranoid delusions. His diagnosis was schizophrenia. While Rawlings was hospitalized, his wife left him. He was given a low dosage of an antipsychotic drug and discharged from the hospital. He was free of the paranoia and delusions and felt much better. But after a while Rawlings began to regard his medication as "poison" and stopped taking it. The strange and disordered thoughts returned. His father pleaded with him to take the medicine. The two fought bitterly over the issue, and at the time of Terri's murder they had not spoken for a couple of months.

The Kansas City Police Department issued a nationwide WANTED notice, warning that Gary Rawlings should be considered armed and dangerous. He was a martial-arts enthusiast, a gun collector, and an expert marksman. He assembled his own bullets and customized the stocks of his rifles, inlaying them with gold. His attempts to join the armed forces had failed, but at Terri's house the police found dog tags stamped with Rawlings's name and Social Security number. Before the murder his fondness for guns had not seemed abnormal. Kathryn's two sons, Jason and Billy, thought Gary Rawlings was pretty cool. He seemed like a good guy; there was nothing scary about him. Rawlings obtained his weapons at local

gun shops, at the Bullet Hole and the Second Amendment. The owner of the Bullseye Gun Works told investigators that Rawlings had recently traded a rifle for a Cobray M-11 pistol that could fire up to thirty-two 9mm rounds without a reload. In order to obtain this semi-automatic weapon Rawlings had signed a federal form swearing that he had never been "adjudicated mentally defective or . . . committed to a mental institution." Rawlings had not lied: his admission to the psychiatric ward had been voluntary.

The day after Terri's body was discovered, Kathryn entered her sister's house and frantically start-

ed packing things up. Kathryn and Terri had been extremely close. Despite the eight-year difference in their ages, they liked to think of themselves as twins and best friends. Kathryn had introduced Terri to Rawlings the year before, and now she wanted to get Terri's things out of the house as quickly as possible. Part of her refused to believe that Terri was dead, despite a positive identification by the police, despite the blood that had seeped through the bedding and the mattress to the floor. And if Terri were still alive, somewhere, somehow, she would need her things. Kathryn was afraid that Rawlings would return and destroy everything that had belonged to Terri, everything she'd loved most. As Kathryn gathered her sister's clothes, pictures, and books, she was terrified that Rawlings might walk in the door at any moment. When the telephone rang, she couldn't answer it. Terri's cats were hiding somewhere in the house, completely spooked. The cats had been there at the time of the murder and had gone unfed and untended for days as Terri lay there. One of the cats fought bitterly to avoid capture, scratching and drawing blood. Kathryn's husband, one of her brothers, and some friends helped her clear the place out. Al Smith could not bear the thought of entering Terri's house. "I'd rather burn it down," he said.

About 600 people attended Terri's funeral, on a cold, windy morning. The priest gave a wonderful eulogy, even though he hadn't known Terri. Kathryn's son Jason looked at his aunt in the open coffin and wished that he could kiss her and wake her up. Although it was bitterly cold at the cemetery, Al did not want the funeral to end. He asked the priest to read the Twenty-third Psalm one more time as a way to delay the burial. After the funeral Al found a note in his van

OF MURDER, WITH THE MURDERER AT THE CORE.

that one of his grandsons had written at the cemetery. The note said, "Dad, I'm cold," and Al instantly imagined Terri lying in the ground, calling for him with those words. The phrase haunted him for years.

Al and Harriett's close relatives, 150 of them, gathered for supper at the church. When the Smiths got home, a detective called and said that Gary Rawlings had been arrested. He had been spotted the previous night at a shopping center in Lewisville, Texas, apparently casing the stores, wearing black clothing and gloves and a black ski mask rolled up like a cap. Inside his old Chevy pickup Lewisville police officers found a twelve-gauge sawed-off shotgun, a .45 pistol, a .308 Remington rifle with a scope and tripod, boxes of ammunition, an eight-inch commando knife hidden in the roof above the driver's-side door, and a ten-channel police scanner with a master list of frequencies used by the State of Kansas and the Kansas City police departments. This was the second time in three days that Rawlings had been stopped by the police. Just hours before Terri's body was discovered, a patrolman in Norman, Oklahoma, had found Rawlings asleep in his truck with a loaded handgun beside him. After bringing him back to the station, examining his various weapons, and finding he had no criminal record, the Norman police had allowed Rawlings to drive off.

Officer Scott Pedigo, of the Lewisville police, ran a check on Rawlings's Kansas license, found that he was wanted for homicide, read him his rights, and arrested him. Rawlings confessed to the murder. He explained that Terri was not just planning to leave him—she was also out to "get him," drugging him and feeding him ground glass.

Rawlings had been suffering from insomnia lately. After Terri fell asleep, he had sat on the bed for hours, full of anger and distress. Then he had removed a gun from under the bed, shot Terri as she slept, waited several more hours, checked her pulse to make sure she was dead, locked up the house, and gone on the run. The murder weapon was not in his truck. Rawlings told the police it was now in a "safe" place.

Under Missouri law a charge of first-degree murder could bring the death penalty. Rawlings was more likely to face a charge of second-degree murder, which carried a maximum sentence of life in prison. A few days after the arrest Harriett called the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, in Kansas City, and spoke to Matt Whitworth, the prosecutor who'd just been assigned to the case. Harriett had kept a journal since nursing school; she liked to think of it as "a poor man's psychiatrist." According to the journal entry she made that day, Matt Whitworth said that the evidence against Rawlings was compelling but that a trial was at least a year away. Rawlings might choose to plead guilty in return for a lesser sentence, or to plead not guilty by reason of insanity. Whitworth seemed to think that an insanity defense would never hold up in court. "Insanity" was a legal term that applied in very few cases, even when the killer was mentally ill. Raw-

lings had an all-too-familiar motive for killing Terri: she was going to leave him. And by fleeing the state Rawlings had demonstrated an awareness that killing his girlfriend was wrong. The defense might find psychiatrists to testify that Rawlings was moved by an "irresistible impulse" to commit the murder, but Whitworth told the Smiths that he would find psychiatrists to say exactly the opposite.

AS the months passed, Harriett called the prosecutor's office once or twice a week to keep track of the case. Rawlings had been charged with second-degree murder and armed criminal action. After an initial examination he was found incompetent to stand trial. He was sent to the Biggs Forensic Center, a maximum-security complex at the state hospital in Fulton, for further evaluation. In December, Harriett called the prosecutor's office and learned that Matt Whitworth was no longer employed there. His replacement, Charles McKeon, seemed friendly on the phone but less enthusiastic about the case. In the spring of 1988 Rawlings was found competent to stand trial. A trial date was set for early September, and then postponed for several weeks. McKeon told the Smiths that beating an insanity defense would be tough—and that in any event he was leaving the prosecutor's office for a new job. On October 3 the Smiths called his replacement, Dale Close. Although Close had not yet examined the evidence in the case, he reassured the Smiths. "After all, anyone knowing he was facing prison will want to plead insanity," Close said, according to Harriett's journal. The Smiths felt good about Dale Close; he seemed to have a sincere interest in their daughter's murder.

Two days later a judge found Gary Rawlings not guilty by reason of insanity in the murder of Terri Smith. The Jackson County Prosecutor's Office had agreed to a plea bargain. The following week Al and Harriett called the prosecutor's office to learn if a trial date had been set. "Oh, we accepted the insanity defense," they were told. "It's all over." Al and Harriett were stunned. Dale Close later told them that Gary Rawlings was a sick young man who would most likely spend the rest of his life locked away in a mental institution.

After giving the plea bargain more consideration, the Smiths felt satisfied. They knew a fair amount about paranoid schizophrenia. Harriett had worked as a nurse in a psychiatric ward—and one of their own sons, Kenneth, was a paranoid schizophrenic. He lived nearby, unable to work, relying on powerful medication to keep the voices and hallucinations at bay. Harriett thought that the mentally ill were unfairly burdened with a reputation for violence, too often portrayed as "psycho killers" in movies and on television. The vast majority of paranoid schizophrenics never committed any violent crimes. But Gary Rawlings had crossed the line; he had killed in response to an imaginary threat. In the same situation most paranoid schizophrenics would have simply walked away. How great a threat could Terri have

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posed, fast asleep? Rawlings's mental illness was subtle enough that others, even the Smiths, had not noticed any warning signs until it was too late. Al and Harriett did not want to see Rawlings cruelly punished in a state prison; they just wanted him off the streets.

In the spring of 1990 Harriett called the prosecutor's office to learn where Rawlings was being held. On May 21 she was told that he was at a mental hospital in St. Joseph, Missouri, and that he had applied for a conditional release. His hearing was set to take place in three days.

A person found not guilty by reason of insanity in Missouri had the right to petition for release from the hospital. An unconditional release granted total freedom; a conditional release had to be renewed periodically and allowed varying degrees of freedom, according to its terms. A few months after being declared not guilty by reason of insanity, Rawlings had been transferred from the maximum-security complex at Fulton State Hospital to St. Joseph State Hospital, a minimum-security facility. For the past three months he had been assigned to the independent-living-skills (ILS) unit, the least restrictive form of housing—an unlocked building on the hospital grounds. Rawlings was now applying to leave the hospital with his father.

The conditional-release hearing was held at a civil court in St. Joseph. This was no longer a criminal case; Gary Rawlings had been found not guilty of the murder. He was represented by a lawyer from the Missouri Attorney General's Office, acting on behalf of the Department of Mental Health. To oppose the release the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office sent a young intern, a law-school student who had looked at some psychology textbooks.

Judge Bill Roberts opened the hearing by explaining that when a

patient like Gary Rawlings is placed in the mental-health system, he is to be afforded treatment. And when that patient is no longer a danger to society, he is eligible for release from the hospital. Mario Decanini, a psychiatrist in the mental hospital's ILS unit, told the court that Rawlings seemed to be in good contact with reality. He had not exhibited any psychotic behavior, he regretted killing his girlfriend, and he understood the need to take his medicine regularly. The schizophrenia was in remission. Rawlings met all the department's requirements for a conditional release. A forensic caseworker and another psychiatrist from the Department of Mental Health supported this view, although both psychiatrists acknowledged that without his medication Rawlings might kill again.

Kathryn testified that she lived in constant fear of Gary Rawlings. Indeed, she was afraid even to testify as he sat there in the courtroom. Harriett read a prepared statement, arguing that paranoid schizophrenia can never be cured, that Rawlings needed to be carefully monitored for the rest of his life, and that without medical supervision he posed a threat to himself and to other people. She asked the court to keep him institutionalized. Judge Roberts denied Rawlings a conditional release, but asked the Smiths to face some unpleasant facts: Rawlings had a legal right to keep applying for release. If he remained free of delusions, made no threats, and committed no violent acts, it was just a matter of time before he left the mental hospital.

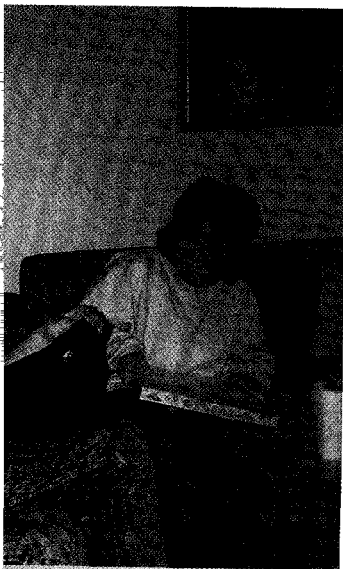
The Smiths drove back to Kansas City, and not long afterward Judge Roberts changed his ruling. Rawlings was granted the conditional release, though not under the terms he had requested. He was limited to day passes in St. Joseph under the supervision of his father.



**ROBERT CLARK WHITSON,
BEATEN TO DEATH
AT AGE 19, CORDELE,
GEORGIA, 1990**

**TERRI SMITH (LEFT),
SHOT TO DEATH AT AGE 23,
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI,
1987**





Al and Harriett felt profoundly betrayed, not only by this judge but by the entire criminal-justice system. The Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, they felt, had at important times ignored and then misled them. The Missouri Department of Mental Health was now treating them with condescension, as though they had no right to interfere in this case. Gary Rawlings had never been in touch with the Smiths to express remorse. Nobody from the Rawlings family

had attended Terri's funeral or sent condolences. Just three and a half years after Terri's death her murderer would be enjoying day passes with his father. In the eyes of the law no crime had been committed against the Smith family; a crime had been committed against the state. Somehow the world had turned upside-down. Everyone seemed deeply concerned about the murderer and his rights. The victims of murder and their loved ones, Al and Harriett now believed, did not have any rights.

THE VICTIM'S ROLE

IN many societies throughout history a murder was avenged by the victim's family. If the killer's family offered resistance, the result was a blood feud—a vendetta—that might last for generations. As societies became more prosperous and more settled, they gained a strong incentive to resolve such conflicts peaceably. The victim's clan and the murderer's clan were encouraged to negotiate an equitable solution. Tribal elders served as mediators. If negotiations broke down, the blood feud resumed. The murderer's clan was responsible for carrying out the settlement—for paying any fines and for ensuring good behavior in the future. A murderer who violated the terms of an agreement might be killed by his or her own family in order to keep the peace. Punishments for murder varied among tribes. In Morocco the Berbers forced the murderer into exile, although the victim's family might later permit his return. In California the Yurok Indians forced the murderer to compensate the victim's family; payment might include strings of seashells, red obsidian, a woodpecker-scalp headband, and a daughter. In East Africa the Jolou often required

not only the death of a man's murderer but also the impregnation by a member of the victim's clan of a woman from the murderer's clan, so that the ghost of the victim might have a wife and children. A murderer's obligation to the victim's family, the need to appease the victim's ghost, and the threat of divine retribution are themes occurring so often in so many cultures that they seem to express some fundamental human loathing for murder and demand for justice.

Under Anglo-Saxon law a murderer paid a mandatory fine, called the wergeld, to the victim's family. The exact amount of the wergeld was determined through an elaborate calculation involving the social status of the victim. Everyone's life had a price, eventually codified in the *Dooms of Alfred*, a ninth-century handbook of criminal fines. If a murderer failed to pay the wergeld within a year, he or she was deemed an outlaw—a person at war with the community, who could legally be killed by anyone. In addition to paying the victim's family, the murderer had to pay a fine, called the wite, to the local nobleman or to the King. By the twelfth century the wite had grown so much larger than the wergeld that the nobility took the murderer's entire payment, usurping the monetary

**IGOR BERENSHTEYN
(THIRD FROM RIGHT),
SHOT TO DEATH
AT AGE 23, BALTIMORE,
MARYLAND, 1994**



claims of the victim's family. The ancient relationship between the murderer's clan and the victim's clan was erased. A murder was now considered a breach of "the King's peace"—a crime against the monarchy. The victim's family no longer had a protected legal status, or a right to compensation, or any authority to determine the murderer's punishment.

The Founding Fathers had little reason to be concerned about the legal status of crime victims and their families. As the criminologist William F. McDonald has noted, the ma-

DORA STILL KEPT HER SON'S TRUCK IN THE DRIVEWAY

chinery of law enforcement in Colonial America functioned without any police forces or public prosecutors. A private citizen could investigate a crime, obtain an arrest, and then hire an attorney to write an indictment and prosecute the case. In the absence of detectives, "thief-takers" pursued criminals for a bounty or a reward. Men were often obliged to go after a murderer; a New York law required them to be "ready and armed and accoutred" for the job.

This reliance on private prosecutions undoubtedly favored the rich, but it also placed the victim at the heart of the criminal-justice system. The authors of the Constitution, having recently battled the arbitrary power of the British monarchy, recognized the need to protect the rights of the accused. At the time, the rights of crime victims hardly seemed endangered.

The rise of American cities in the nineteenth century was accompanied by the development of police forces, prosecutors' offices, and departments of correction. Power to enforce the law was transferred from ordinary citizens to professionals. The state or federal government became the offended party in a criminal act and also the recipient of any fines. Crime victims were relegated to the sidelines, valued mainly for their testimony in court. The growing interest in rehabilitation as a correctional goal placed even greater emphasis on the criminal. Theorists strove to uncover the social forces responsible for crime, and penologists experimented with humane methods of reform. An individual victim's plight seemed less important in the grand scheme when a crime was not only committed against society but caused by it as well.

The victim was rarely considered by criminologists until a few years after the Second World War, when Hans von Hentig wrote his landmark study, *The Criminal & His Victim* (1948). Von Hentig was a German criminologist living in Kansas City. His work proved influential, helping to launch a new academic discipline: "victimology." According to Von Hentig, "the victim shapes and molds the criminal." Indeed, Von Hentig thought that the victim was often to blame for the crime. His theory was partly inspired by a Franz Werfel novel, *The Murdered One Is Guilty*. Von Hentig argued that murder victims sometimes caused their own deaths, certain women encouraged rape, a large number of incest victims were willing participants, and "the cupidity of Negroes" tended to attract confidence men and swindlers. In explaining the behavior of many criminals, Von Hentig quoted King Lear: "I am a man/More sinn'd against than sinning."

During the 1950s the English penal reformer

Margery Fry revived the long-forgotten idea that criminals should compensate their victims. The payment of restitution, Fry believed, would be of great moral benefit to the criminal; the victim's gain, though desirable, was of secondary concern. Fry later became a champion of state compensation for crime victims, and compensation schemes influenced by her views were established in England, New Zealand, and California. The first federal studies of crime victims in the United States were conducted in the late 1960s. They measured how many crimes were going unreported, and the federal programs based on them were designed to encourage victims to testify in court.

The "victims'-rights movement" began largely among feminists in the early 1970s, with the opening of the first rape-crisis centers. Outrage at the mistreatment of rape victims soon led to a reappraisal of how the criminal-justice system treated all crime victims. A grassroots movement in behalf of victims' rights attracted support from unlikely allies: women's groups and law-and-order Republicans. In 1982 President Ronald Reagan appointed a Task Force on Victims of Crime. Its report condemned the treatment of victims by the criminal-justice system and called for a constitutional amendment on victims' rights. Congress passed the Victims of Crime Act in 1984, using revenues from bail forfeitures and criminal fines to subsidize state programs for crime victims. Prosecutors began to hire victims' advocates; crisis centers for crime victims were opened; and a number of states amended their constitutions to protect victims' rights.

The rights being demanded by

**GRETCHEN MAYER,
STABBED TO DEATH AT
AGE 27, LOUISVILLE,
KENTUCKY, 1989**



IS THOUGH HE MIGHT RETURN FOR IT ANY DAY.

crime victims and the families of murder victims were hardly revolutionary. State victims'-rights amendments usually guaranteed the right to be notified in advance of any court hearing in a case, the right to be consulted before a plea bargain, the right prior to sentencing to give a statement about the crime's impact, and the right to be notified of a criminal's parole hearing, release date, or escape from prison. Crime victims and their families also sought the right to remain in the courtroom throughout a trial. Defense attorneys often placed the victim's family members on the witness list, whether or not they might testify, in order to remove them from the jury's sight. Victims were not demanding the authority to select punishments or veto judicial decisions. According to Paul G. Cassell, a professor at the University of Utah College of Law and a leader in the victims'-rights movement, crime victims were simply asking "to be notified, to be present, and to be heard."

Opponents of the movement, such as Lynne N. Henderson, a professor of law at Indiana University School of Law at Bloomington, stressed "the wrongs of victims' rights," arguing that such proposals were merely a smokescreen for a conservative political agenda. Crime victims were being manipulated as an excuse to build more prisons and cut social programs. Henderson and others contended that none of the traditional goals of criminal law—deterrence, retribution, rehabilitation, and incapacitation—justified giving victims a larger role in the system. Nevertheless, the call for victims' rights struck a popular chord, appealing to common sense and gaining huge support at the polls.

The strongest resistance to victims' rights came from within the criminal-justice system, not because such rights might harm defendants but because they threatened the time-honored workings of the machinery. Perhaps nine of every ten criminal cases were settled through plea bargains. Angry confrontations between the prosecution and the defense were common only in fictional courtroom dramas. In real life defense attorneys, prosecutors, and judges routinely collaborated behind closed doors, disposing of cases and choosing punishments by mutual consent. Including the victim's opinion would complicate the equation, diminishing the prosecutor's freedom to strike a deal. Empowering the crime victim would place a limit on the power of the state.

IN the fall of 1990 the Smiths learned that Gary Rawlings wanted another conditional release. With support from the Department of Mental Health, Rawlings applied to leave St. Joseph State Hospital and move into a private boardinghouse. For both philosophical and fiscal reasons Missouri law encouraged the de-institutionalization of mental patients, requiring that they always be housed in the "least re-

strictive" environment practicable. Psychiatrists at the mental hospital felt that Rawlings was a good candidate for release. He had exhibited no psychotic symptoms and no dangerous behavior. He seemed to understand the nature of his illness and the importance of taking his medication. He denied having violent fantasies or uncontrollable impulses. The department's community-placement staff planned to meet with Rawlings at least once a month after his release. He would be forbidden to consume alcohol, use illicit drugs, or possess a gun. The owner of Smitty's Sit 'N Siesta boardinghouse, in St. Joseph, a private facility with about a dozen mentally ill residents, said in a letter that she'd be "glad to give Gary Rawlings a try."

The second conditional-release hearing was held on December 10, 1990, in the same courtroom and before the same judge as the first one. The Smiths were accompanied by an assistant prosecutor from Jackson County; Al and Harriett had informed the local media about the details of the case. Gary Rawlings was represented by Natalie Coe, an assistant attorney general. Before the hearing began, Gary Rawlings Sr. approached Kathryn and said that his son had always been very fond of her—a comment intended, no doubt, to reassure Kathryn that the young man meant her no harm. But the words had the opposite effect, unnerving Kathryn even more. She did not want his affection. Rawlings had killed her sister, had never expressed remorse to her family, and now might go free. Kathryn testified again about her fear of him. For the rest of the hearing she was unable to look at Rawlings. Harriett told the court that a paranoid schizophrenic's behavior in the highly structured setting of a mental hospital offered no reliable guide to his behavior outside the hospital. Someone needed to make sure that Gary Rawlings took his medicine every day. At the end of the hearing Judge Roberts granted Rawlings another conditional release and, as a courtesy, wished the young man good luck.

Al Smith later wrote to the judge, asking how Gary Rawlings could be allowed back into the community so soon after being found mentally incompetent. "This man is an admitted murderer," Al wrote. "Please, I beg of you, do not let him loose to kill again." In reply Judge Roberts explained that under Missouri law someone trying to block the release of a mental patient had to provide "clear and convincing" evidence of that patient's dangerousness. If the Department of Mental Health thought that Rawlings no longer posed a threat, then the burden of proof fell on the Smiths. Rawlings had not committed any violent acts since the murder; there was no sound legal basis for denying his release.

The Smiths had begun to meet other people in Kansas City who felt equally betrayed by the criminal-justice sys-

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tem. The insensitive treatment of crime victims and the families of murder victims seemed not the exception but the rule. A local chapter of Parents of Murdered Children had recently been formed. At the first POMC meeting Al and Harriett attended, a man named Mike Solaberry spoke about the injustices of the system. Solaberry's daughter Julie had been murdered by a friend, stabbed 163 times. The killer had received a life sentence but would be eligible for parole in eighteen years. Solaberry was a recent immigrant whose faith in the American dream had been shattered. His anger was eloquent and pure. It affected Al deeply; he felt the same outrage but had not yet been able to find the right words. During the meeting Al's anger was finally unleashed in public—a scathing, Old Testament anger. He refused to accept the way things were in Missouri. Gary Rawlings would be seeking more freedom, and Al was determined to keep him off the streets. If the laws were unfair to victims, Al decided, then it was time to change the laws.

A GRIEF LIKE NO OTHER

PARENTS of Murdered Children was founded by Charlotte and Robert Hullinger in 1978. She was a legal secretary and a teacher at the time; he was a Lutheran minister. The Hullingers had three children and lived in Cincinnati, Ohio. Their daughter Lisa, a junior in college, had been murdered by her ex-boyfriend while studying in Germany. She had broken up with him several months earlier. He killed her with a sledgehammer. His father was a corporate vice-president in St. Louis. A defense attorney at the trial argued that the young man could not be held entirely responsible for the crime. A psychiatrist reported that the killer had “never learned how to tolerate rejection.” Lisa's murderer was found guilty in a German court, given a prison sentence of three to five years, and released after spending less than a year and a half behind bars.

Charlotte went back to work in the fall of 1978, a couple of weeks after the murder. Many of her friends soon stopped asking how she was doing, stopped mentioning Lisa's name. Life began to seem surreal. Charlotte felt as though she were walking around with open wounds, bleeding, and yet few people seemed to notice. Cheerful Christmas cards arrived at the house without any acknowledgment of what had just happened to Lisa. Old friends who did not know what to say chose to say nothing at all. Bob Hullinger thought that people's response to the murder often seemed like “a conspiracy of silence.”

Desperate to find a book on the aftermath of murder, Charlotte visited local libraries, but found none. She needed to speak to other people who had experienced the same kind of loss. She heard about a Catholic priest who counseled grieving mothers. Although her husband was a Lutheran

minister, as was her father, Charlotte did not hesitate to give Father Ken Czillinger a call.

Czillinger had been interested for years in how Americans deal with, or more often don't deal with, the issue of death. His interest was more than academic. The first funeral he performed as a priest, at the age of twenty-seven, was his younger brother's. Within five years Czillinger had also lost both his parents. Much was being written in the late 1960s and early 1970s about the “denial of death” in American society. Czillinger came to know the psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and many of the early pioneers in the study of bereavement. Subjects that had long been suppressed—the realities of death and dying, the stages of grief and mourning—were now being openly explored. Czillinger viewed his priesthood not as a stamp of authority for providing answers but as a means for joining the search.

Czillinger introduced Bob and Charlotte to a few other people whose children had been murdered. The meeting took place in the Hullingers' living room. These grieving parents immediately felt a close connection. They could easily express and understand feelings that were considered awkward or inappropriate or disturbing by the rest of society. Hearing that others felt the same way relieved the sense of isolation. Charlotte decided to form a support group for the families of murder victims. “If life experiences are not used,” she maintained, “they are wasted.” She began to seek out the relatives of murder victims, convinced that many others felt alienated and alone. Whenever she read about a murder in the newspaper, she would get in touch with the victim's family, sometimes driving at night for miles to pick up people at their homes and bring them to the meetings. A group begun out of a desperate personal need assumed a larger importance, as the Hullingers learned how many other devastated parents needed help. At first the Hullingers' living room served as the group's meeting place, Lisa's old bedroom as its office. Chapters were soon formed in other cities and states. Although the group welcomed grieving siblings, spouses, and friends, most of its members had lost a child to murder. Bob and Charlotte wanted a name for the organization that was direct and to the point, not sugarcoated. “Parents of Murdered Children” said it all. This was a group no one ever hoped to join.

The Hullingers learned that the grief caused by murder does not follow a predictable course. It does not neatly unfold in stages. When a person dies after a long illness, his or her family has time to prepare emotionally for the death, to feel an anticipatory grief. When someone is murdered, the death usually comes without warning. A parent might have breakfast with a child on an ordinary morning—and then never see or hold or speak to that child again. The period of mourning after a natural death lasts one, two, perhaps three years. The much more complicated mourning that follows a homicide may be prolonged by the legal system, the atti-

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tudes of society, the nature of the crime, and the final disposition of the case. A murder is an unnatural death; no ordinary rules apply. The intense grief experienced by survivors can last four years, five years, a decade, even a lifetime.

In the days and weeks right after a murder the victim's family is often in a state of shock, feeling numb, sometimes unable to cry. The murder of a loved one seems almost impossible to comprehend. Life feels unreal, like a dream. Survivors may need to go over the details of the crime again and again, discussing them endlessly, as though trying to put together the pieces of a puzzle, struggling to make sense of it all. They tell themselves, "This can't be true." After other kinds of crimes the victim lives to tell how it happened and to describe how it felt. A murder often forces the victim's family to reconstruct events. They ask, How did this take place? Why? Did my loved one suffer? The police usually try to shield family members, keeping them away from the crime scene and from gruesome photographs of the victim. Nevertheless, many

**ARTHUR LEE TAYLOR,
SHOT TO DEATH AT AGE 25,
ALBANY, GEORGIA, 1994**

survivors demand to see these things. They want to confront the reality of the murder and to know the worst. Denied access to the

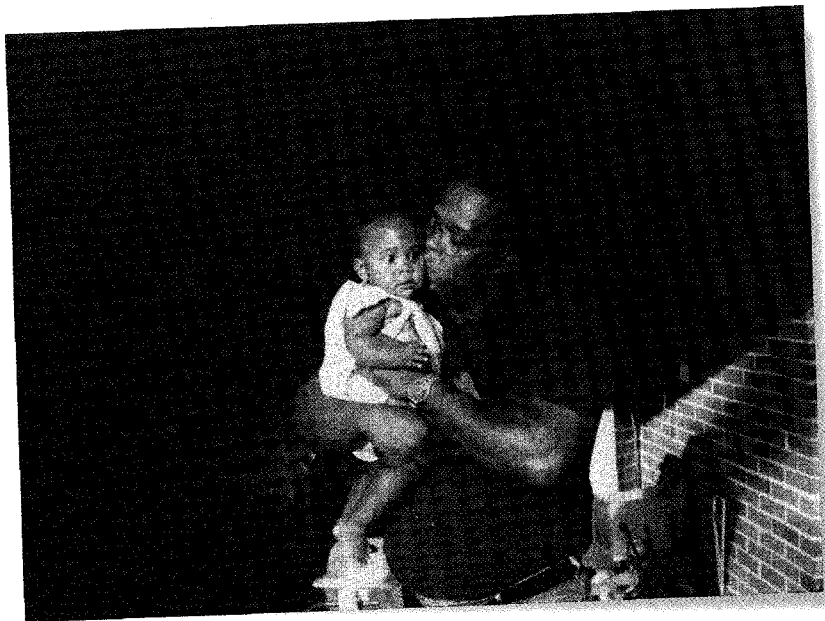
resolution that is disappointing. Insufficient evidence may lead the prosecution to drop charges or to reduce them from murder to manslaughter. Co-defendants may be given a lesser punishment, despite a role in the murder, in order to obtain their cooperation. Each new hearing may stir up feelings that were seemingly laid to rest. "You never bury a loved one who's been murdered," one survivor has explained, "because the justice system keeps digging them up." The sense of powerlessness that a murder inspires in a victim's family is frequently reinforced by the courts. When the victim's family is barred from the courtroom during a trial (while the murderer's family is allowed to attend, looking somber and well dressed), it seems that the murderer still somehow has the upper hand, still exerts more power.

Even when a trial ends in a verdict of guilty and a sentence that seems appropriate, the family of a murder victim may be left with a hollow feeling. They may realize for the first time that no amount of punishment given to the murderer can relieve their sorrow or bring the victim back to life.

The long duration and repetitive nature of the grief following a homicide can become a source of frustration to old friends. With the best of intentions, friends may want the survivor to "get over it." They may not see the point of discussing the same details of the crime again and again. The desire that survivors end their mourning also has a selfish component: the magnitude of their loss and pain is not easy to accept. People search for ways to distance themselves from such tragedy. One way is to assume that the victim was somehow responsible for his or her death. Blaming the victim has a strong intrinsic appeal. It preserves the illusion that the world is rational and just, that things

happen for a reason. It sustains the American belief that a person can control his or her own destiny. And it gets everybody else—at times even the murderer—off the hook. If the victim is somehow to blame, according to this logic, then the rest of us are still safe.

Although others frequently put the blame for a murder on the victim, the families of murder victims are often plagued by their own guilt. A sudden, unexpected death may leave all sorts of issues between the victim and his or her family unresolved. The victim's family may feel regret about words



facts by the authorities or by a lack of information about the crime, the relatives of murder victims are frequently tormented by their imaginations and by questions that can never be answered.

After a natural death the family of the deceased can begin the process of mourning. After a murder the criminal-justice system usually delays and disrupts the grieving of the victim's loved ones. If the murderer is never found, the death lacks a sense of closure; if the murderer is apprehended, the victim's family may face years of legal proceedings and a



RICHARD SHANNON,
SHOT TO DEATH AT AGE 18,
PORTLAND, OREGON, 1993

that were said or left unsaid. Siblings may feel guilty about surviving. Parents may be torn by self-doubts. Parents are supposed to

keep their children safe from harm, at any cost. The murder of a child looms as a profound failure of parental responsibility, regardless of whether or not that murder could have been prevented. The parents of a murder victim wonder what their child might have become someday. The murder of a child violates the natural order, destroying a parent's stake in the future.

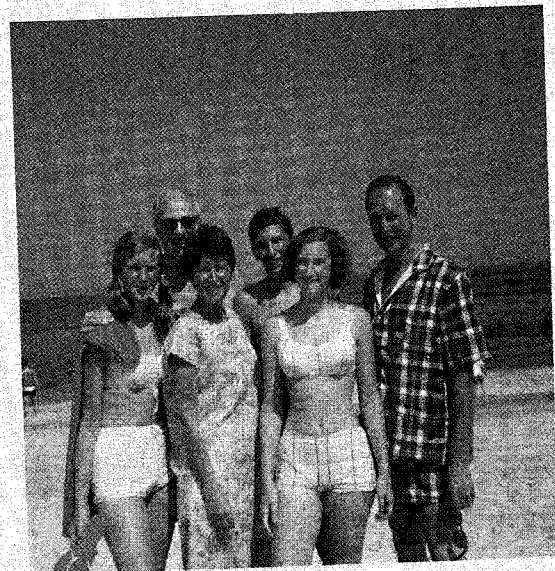
Each member of a family is likely to grieve differently, creating great potential for conflict. Siblings of the victim may feel neglected by their parents or suddenly overprotected. Spouses may be unable to give each other support when it is needed most. One may be having a good day while the other feels down; the discrepancy in moods often breeds resentment. Women tend to be more demonstrative in their grief, crying more readily and putting their thoughts into words. Traditional notions of masculinity often complicate a father's grief. As the putative head of the household, a father may feel an added burden of responsibility for the murder, for failing in his role as protector. Men who do not show emotion are sometimes accused of being distant and unfeeling; those who cry openly may be thought weak. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the stresses of losing a child are responsible for an extremely high rate of divorce among grieving parents. Events that once brought a family together—holidays, birthdays, anniversaries—become reminders of loss. The internalized grief felt by most men, and many women, may precipitate a variety of serious illnesses. Some parents of murder victims soon follow them to the grave.

Children suffer perhaps the most of all. Rachel Burrell is

the founder and director of Fernside, in Cincinnati, one of the nation's first centers for grieving children. Burrell says it is a myth that children bounce back after a tragedy—a sign of wishful thinking among adults. A child's grief tends to be cyclical, coming and going amid intervals of play. Children whose parents have been murdered exhibit a wide range of behavioral and developmental problems. They may suffer from psychosomatic ailments, such as headaches, stomachaches, dizziness, and uncontrollable trembling. They may be teased or avoided at school. Their self-esteem may plummet, and also their trust in authority. Many studies have shown that children who are directly exposed to violence are much more likely to commit violent acts as adults. Millions of children in America are now particularly at risk. A study in one Chicago neighborhood found that 33 percent of its schoolchildren had witnessed a murder. A study in Washington, D.C., found that 31 percent of the city's first- and second-graders had witnessed shootings, and 39 percent had seen dead bodies. The children of murder victims often lack the language skills or even the proper frame of reference to express their grief. Rachel Burrell encourages them to put their feelings into their art. The walls at Fernside are covered with children's paintings and drawings. In crude but powerful works parents float in heaven, killers are punished, and bright-orange jack-o'-lanterns shed tears.

The emotional and psychological distress suffered by the relatives of murder victims in many ways resembles that of rape victims, combat veterans, and prisoners who have been tortured. During the 1970s researchers showed a renewed interest in the long-term effects of trauma. The women's movement was encouraging rape victims to speak

STUART HESS (CENTER),
SHOT TO DEATH AT AGE 24,
ROSEDALE, MARYLAND,
1975



out about their experiences, and soldiers returning from Vietnam were exhibiting an array of psychiatric illnesses. A syndrome previously labeled "battle fatigue" or "shell shock" was renamed "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD). Some of its common symptoms are recurring nightmares and flashbacks, insomnia, memory loss, difficulty concentrating, feelings of alienation, hypervigilance, and an exaggerated startle reaction. A severe trauma like the murder of a loved one can also induce depression, phobias, changes in personality, and substance abuse. The British psychiatrist Colin Murray Parkes has observed that trauma victims sometimes develop obsessive-compulsive disorders. One of his patients was a ten-year-old girl whose sister had been abducted and murdered. The young girl developed the habit of constantly glancing over her shoulder to make sure nobody was sneaking up behind her, a habit that turned into a nervous tic.

Anyone can fall prey to mental disorders after a traumatic event. A prior history of psychological problems is by no means necessary for the development of PTSD. Studies of soldiers in combat have found that even the healthiest people will crack if the trauma is severe and unrelenting. The meaning of a trauma, or its absence of meaning, is an important contributing factor. During the Vietnam War, U.S. Army mortuary workers who handled the personal effects of the dead—the photographs of girlfriends, the cards and letters from back home—were more traumatized than the workers who handled the bodies.

Post-traumatic stress disorder stems from physiological changes in the central nervous system, according to Bessel van der Kolk, a professor of psychiatry at Boston University. A person's stress response becomes fixed in a heightened state of alert, preparing the body to fight, freeze, or flee at the slightest provocation. When the traumatic event is something that cannot be undone, the heightened stress response becomes both useless and destructive. People suffering from PTSD become "stuck": they constantly relive the trauma in powerful detail and then organize their lives around avoiding anything that might provoke these terrible memories. They swing between vivid, almost lifelike re-creations of the trauma and total denial of it. Van der Kolk helps his patients to move beyond the traumatic memories and develop a broader perspective, one that finds meanings in life that will counter the feelings of loss and sheer terror. "Sometimes a little bit of denial," he says, "can be a beautiful thing."

If a family member actually witnessed the murder, the nightmares and flashbacks often revolve around details of the killing. For other survivors, the moment when they first learned about the murder becomes the traumatic event, relived again and again. The means of death notification can influence a survivor's development of PTSD. Hearing about

the murder over the phone or from a reporter adds significantly to the trauma. Concerns of Police Survivors, an organization serving the family members of police officers killed in the line of duty, recommends that the families of victims always be notified in person. The message should be straightforward, compassionate, and direct. Ideally, at least two people should conduct the death notification. They should be prepared for all sorts of behavior. Survivors may try to harm themselves, to run away, or to attack the person bringing the bad news.

Nearly a decade ago Dean G. Kilpatrick, the director of the National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, at the Medical University of South Carolina, led the only large-scale study of homicide's effects on surviving family members that has ever been conducted. Kilpatrick found that about a quarter of the people who lose an immediate family member to murder subsequently develop full-blown PTSD. About half develop several symptoms of PTSD. About five percent of the survivors in his study were still suffering from full-blown PTSD more than ten years after the murder, and 22 percent were still experiencing one or more of its symptoms. Kilpatrick estimates that perhaps 10 million Americans have endured the murder of a family member or a close friend.

The relatives of murder victims often lose not only their faith in society, the legal system, and old friends but also their faith in God. The sense of personal invulnerability that allows someone to lead a normal life—to leave the house, drive a car, say good-bye to loved ones before a mundane errand, confident of seeing them again—may be utterly destroyed. A murder can provoke an existential despair completely at odds with a person's lifelong beliefs. The anger many survivors feel, along with often violent fantasies of revenge, may conflict with religious traditions that stress mercy and forgiveness. Ministers and priests may alienate the families of murder victims with comments like "The Lord knows best," "Everything happens for a reason," and "It's all part of His plan." The murder of a child is difficult to reconcile with belief in a just, all-powerful God. A congregation may react insensitively to the persistence of a survivor's grief. Ken Czillinger thinks that America's religious institutions tend to promote a male-oriented approach to grief, stressing both repression and denial of feelings. The families of murder victims often find themselves pulling away from churches that have long been the focus of their lives.

In 1985 Bob Hullinger decided to start a ministry for crime victims and survivors, one that would reach out to them and educate others about their plight. Hullinger had learned that the United States had more than sixty prison ministries de-

"YOU NEVER BURY A LOVED ONE WHO'S BEEN MURDERED"



**RICHARD LEE RACKLEY
(FAR LEFT), PRESUMED
MURDERED IN 1995 AT AGE
71; SKELETAL REMAINS
FOUND IN WORTH COUNTY,
GEORGIA, 1997**

voted to the spiritual needs of criminals—but no ministries designed to meet the needs of their victims. Saving a murderer’s soul seemed a more interesting challenge, perhaps, than looking after a murder victim’s family. Hullinger spent a year assembling a proposal. After some debate his proposal was narrowly rejected by a majority of the Lutheran ministers in Cincinnati. More than a decade later the United States has only a handful of national Christian ministries devoted to helping crime victims and their families. One of the largest is Neighbors Who Care, founded in 1993 by Lisa Barnes Lampman, which serves more than 5,000 victims and survivors each year. Its parent organization, Prison Fellowship Ministries, serves 200,000 inmates each year.

NOT FORGETTING

WHEN Terri Smith’s body was discovered, Harriett was next door at a neighbor’s house, trying to reach Terri’s landlord on the phone. Harriett heard Al yell “Harrie!” from the street, and she knew from the tone of his voice that something terrible had happened. She came out of the neighbor’s house and asked, “Is she dead?” Al said, “Yes,” and Harriett blacked out. Moments later she heard horrible screaming and wailing, like the sounds of a wounded animal way off in the distance, and then she suddenly realized that the sounds were coming from her, that she was screaming and wailing and pounding on Al’s chest. In an instant she came to, and saw that Al was sobbing, and

regained her composure, and decided that her family needed her to be strong. It was her duty to be strong. And for almost a decade afterward Harriett never lost her composure again in public, never fell apart.

Kathryn was at home, having worked the night shift at the post office, when Al called and told her to get down to Terri’s. Kathryn had been worried about her sister, and now she knew from her father’s voice that the worst had happened. When she got to the house, she wanted to go inside and see Terri. She could not believe that her sister was dead—she needed to see for herself. But her parents wouldn’t let her go inside. The rest of the Smith family soon arrived, except Kenny, who was much

too sensitive to handle this kind of stress. Al sat in his van talking to one of the homicide detectives, an older man who was visibly affected by the crime scene and fighting back tears. A television-news crew shot footage of Terri’s house but kept a respectful distance, never trying to interview members of the family.

Harriett had been around death for many years. She spent most of her twelve-hour nursing shifts at the bedsides of dying patients. Perhaps it was her maternal instinct; whereas some nurses avoided the terminally ill, Harriett felt a strong need to make sure that none of her patients died alone. Death was no stranger to her, but murder seemed an entirely different thing, evil and unknown. Harriett did not understand how anyone could choose to take another life, especially Terri’s life. Within an hour of hearing about the murder Harriett instinctively felt surrounded by Terri’s presence. She said a prayer for Terri—“Eternal rest grant upon her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her, and may her soul rest in peace, amen”—and silently repeated the prayer over and over again in the following weeks and months. She prayed that God would have mercy on her daughter’s soul and would accept her into heaven; she refused to believe that Terri’s murder was part of any divine plan. As a nurse, she had been trained to switch off her emotions and hide them until she was alone. Whenever Harriett felt the grief become unbearable, she would lock herself in the bathroom and weep.

Al felt numb for almost two years after the murder, keeping his feelings tightly shut inside. Every now and then Harriett would try to use her nurse’s training in bereavement, subtly asking Al questions that might prompt him to share

THE JUSTICE SYSTEM KEEPS DIGGING THEM UP.”

his thoughts. When he finally realized what she was doing, he said, "Don't give me any of that Goddamn psychology." Al felt drawn to the cemetery, visiting Terri's grave about once a week without telling anybody.

Harriett's twelve siblings and Al's three sisters were a tremendous source of support, and old friends of the Smith family stood by them. Al's co-workers and Harriett's fellow nurses were sympathetic, but not a single doctor at the hospital where Harriett had worked for years offered condolences or even mentioned the fact that Terri had died. Harriett finally walked up to a cardiologist and said, "Did you know that my daughter was murdered?" The doctor's deeply embarrassed reaction made Harriett regret her bluntness. The Smiths were determined to keep Terri's memory alive, to consider her part of their family forever, regardless of what other people might think. When the time came for a new family portrait, Al and Harriett decided to include a framed picture of Terri in it.

Kathryn had great difficulty believing that her sister was dead. At the wake and at the funeral the person in the casket did not look like Terri. Kathryn often blamed herself for the murder. She had hired Gary Rawlings to install new windows

at her house. She had introduced him to Terri. If she'd just hired someone else, maybe Terri would still be alive. Kathryn regretted not having spent more time with her sister in the weeks before the murder. She had recently started a new job at the post office, working nights, and she had let slide a number of chances to get together with Terri. Kathryn had suspected that her sister and Rawlings were having some problems. Perhaps if she'd spent more time with Terri, then Terri would have spoken about the physical abuse, and her murder could have been prevented. Kathryn thought about the murder constantly, wondering how much pain Terri had suffered. Night after night Kathryn had the same vivid dream: Somebody would be at the front door, knocking. She'd go to the door and open it, and a person would be standing there, dressed in a black cape and a black hat, looking down. Suddenly the person would look up, and it would be Terri, and she'd smile and say, "Don't worry, Sis, I'm not really dead."

Kathryn's friends began to lose patience with her. Whenever she started talking about Terri's death, they would abruptly change the subject. A co-worker at the post office once cut her short, saying, "Aren't you over that yet?" Kathryn began to have trouble eating and sleeping. She would sit by the window for hours holding one of her sister's cats, as though the pet were a tangible link to Terri. She was terrified that Rawlings would return and kill the rest of her family. She was always alert, awaiting his arrival, afraid to sleep, afraid to close her eyes in the shower. She developed a serious respiratory illness. She cried and cried and could not stop. Everyone seemed fake and artificial, like actors in a bad play. "Why do people rush around doing this and rush around doing that," she wondered, "when they could be dead tomorrow?"

A few months before the first anniversary of Terri's death Kathryn was admitted to the psychiatric ward at a local hospital. She was convinced that there was a secret plan, that Terri was alive and in hiding. She became obsessed with true-crime magazines, reading anything she could about actual murders, trying to make sense of what had happened to her sister. During her hospitalization the post office tried to fire Kathryn for missing work. Her union blocked the dismissal. After thirty days of treatment her insurance coverage ran out. Kathryn was discharged from the hospital, still mired in a severe depression. If she had murdered Terri instead of mourning her, Kathryn thought, all the psychiatric help in the world would have been provided free.

SPEAKING ABOUT THE UNSPEAKABLE

IN January of 1991 Al and Harriett began writing letters to members of the Missouri state legislature. The Smiths wanted to change the law governing the release of forensic patients from state mental hospitals. Harriett sat at a desk in one of their bedrooms; Al worked at the kitchen

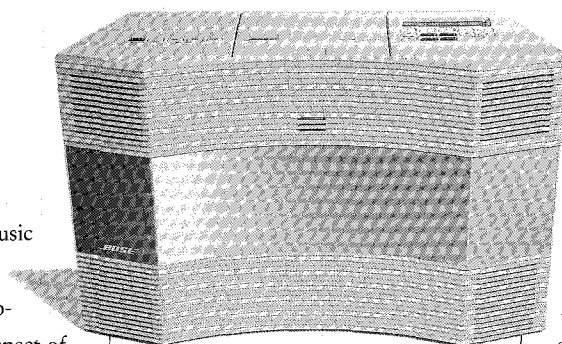
THE POET

She is working now, in a room
not unlike this one,
the one where I write, or you read.
Her table is covered with paper.
The light of the lamp would be
tempered by a shade, where the bulb's
single harshness might dissolve,
but it is not; she has taken it off.
Her poems? I will never know them,
though they are the ones I most need.
Even the alphabet she writes in
I cannot decipher. Her chair—
let us imagine whether it is leather
or canvas, vinyl or wicker. Let her
have a chair, her shadeless lamp,
the table. Let one or two she loves
be in the next room. Let the door
be closed, the sleeping ones healthy.
Let her have time, and silence,
enough paper to make mistakes and go on.

—JANE HIRSHFIELD

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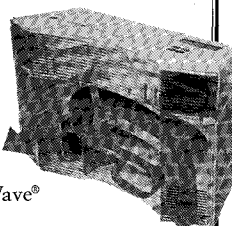
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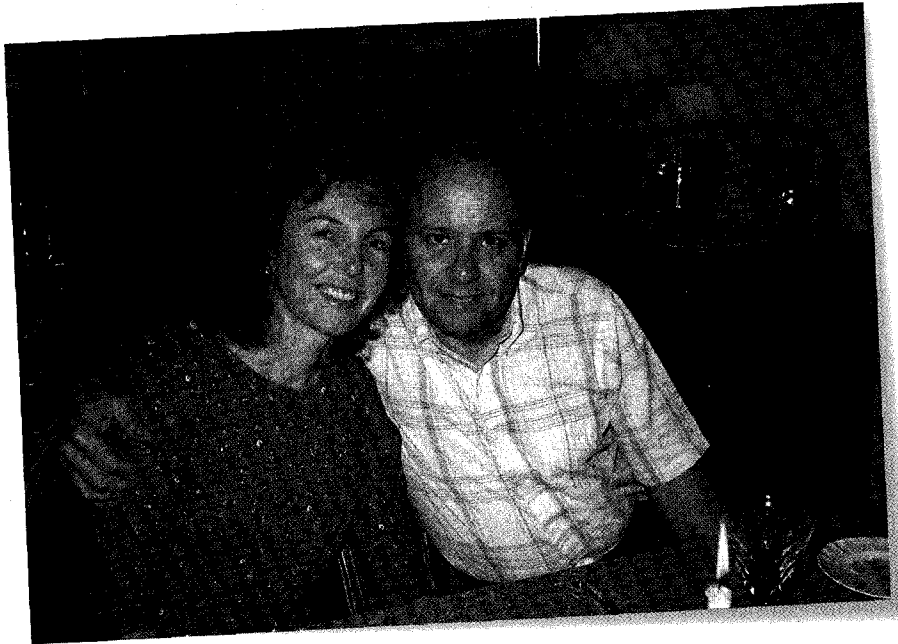
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**PHILIP COUSINS,
SHOT TO DEATH AT AGE 44,
SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA,
1994**

table; together they wrote 197 letters by hand, sending one to each state legislator. They argued that the burden of proof in forensic cases should be shifted from the person trying to block a release to the patient trying to gain freedom. Under the law Al and Harriett were proposing, the Department of Mental Health would have to provide "clear and convincing evidence" that a forensic patient no longer posed a threat to the community. The Smiths thought it would be hard for any psychiatrist to prove that Gary Rawlings was not dangerous. Their friends worried about the letter-writing campaign, concerned that Rawlings might feel persecuted by the Smiths and might one day try to harm them.

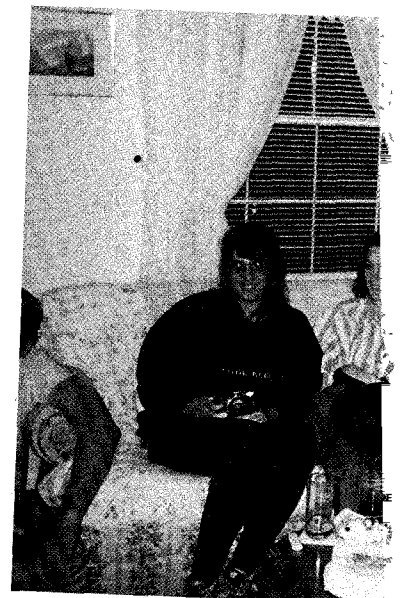
Harriett had retired from her job at the hospital a few months after Terri's death. She devoted herself to family matters and, increasingly, to the cause of victims' rights. She worked part-time as a volunteer at the newly revamped victim-services department of the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, counseling crime victims and guiding them through the intricacies of the criminal-justice system. Al retired from Bendix and threw his energies into the victims'-rights movement as well. He became a familiar face at the statehouse. He grew a beard so that people would remember him—a white beard that, with his booming voice, added a biblical touch to his message. Al also spent a great deal of time in the criminal courts. Whenever the family of a murder victim was barred by defense attorneys from the courtroom, Al would make a point of attending the trial, sitting in court day after day so that someone would be there to represent the victim. Kathryn had introduced her parents to the local chapter of Parents of Murdered Children. Before long Al was writing its monthly newsletter and Harriett was the head of the chapter, taking phone calls at all hours of the day and night.

Once a month the little parish hall at Our Lady of Sorrows Church was filled with tales of human cruelty and a depth of sadness that words could never fully convey. The Smiths formed close bonds there with people from every walk of life. Barriers of race, class, and religion that might otherwise have kept these men and women from ever speaking to one another were broken down by the force of a common tragedy. "We all bleed red blood" was Harriett's way of explaining the unlikely friendships made in that room. The violence of American society was not an abstraction to these people: for each of them murder now had a name and a face.

Syndi Bierman—lovely and blonde, an honor student and a member of her high school drill team, a loving daughter—was murdered at the age of seventeen by several people, including her adopted sister. Barbara and Leonard Bierman had to live not only with the death of one child but also with the vile deeds and imprisonment of their only other child. The Biermans adored their grandchildren and found consolation in these little boys, though they were the offspring of the killer.

Trent Crane was a nineteen-year-old architecture student who worked nights at a gas station to save money for his upcoming wedding. One night five young men kidnapped him as he left work, took him to Swope Park, shot him many times, stole his customized pickup truck, and drove around aimlessly. The truck was so distinctive that the police captured the murderers within hours. One of them was a thirteen-year-old psychopath who showed no remorse about having pulled the trigger. This young killer faced a maximum of eight years in detention. Trent's father, Earl J. Crane, his mother, Barbara Amet, and his stepfather, Ray Amet, were left embittered by the workings of the criminal-justice system and by the pointless slaughter of their hard-working son.

**JAMES GROPPi, SHOT TO
DEATH AT AGE 58, MADISON
HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN, 1996**



Donald V. Pierce Jr., a successful young lawyer in downtown Kansas City, was murdered by one of his employees, a secretary who had stolen office equipment from the firm. Don had been an Eagle Scout when Al Smith was scoutmaster of the troop. Murder brought the Pierces and the Smiths together again. At the trial of Don's killer the defense tried hard to blame the victim, promoting a story about an office romance gone wrong. The murderer was convicted and sent to prison for life. News coverage of the trial, however, spread the defense's lurid accusations far and wide. The victim's parents, Donald and Virginia Pierce, felt that the killer had robbed their son not only of his life but also of his good name.

Karen Keeton, twenty-two and beautiful, was kidnapped by a biker, given to another biker as a "gift," and then raped many times and killed. Both murderers were apprehended. One of them was executed. Although a jury gave the other a life sentence with no possible parole for fifty years, the verdict was overturned on appeal, owing to a technical error. He later pleaded guilty to a lesser offense. Helen Cotter, Karen's mother, now had to face this killer every two years at a parole hearing.

Kimberly Rash was nineteen years old when she was killed, mutilated, and dumped into the Missouri River. Her mother, Suzann M. Larson, was outraged by how local media reported the crime. News accounts emphasized that Kimberly was a prostitute—not that she was the mother of two young children.

Janel and Bob Harrison's daughter Ann had just turned fifteen when she was kidnapped one morning while awaiting her school bus. She was raped and tortured for hours, murdered, and left in the trunk of a stolen car.

Edward C. Hobson's thirteen-year-old son, Chris, was forced to dig his own grave in a field and then killed with

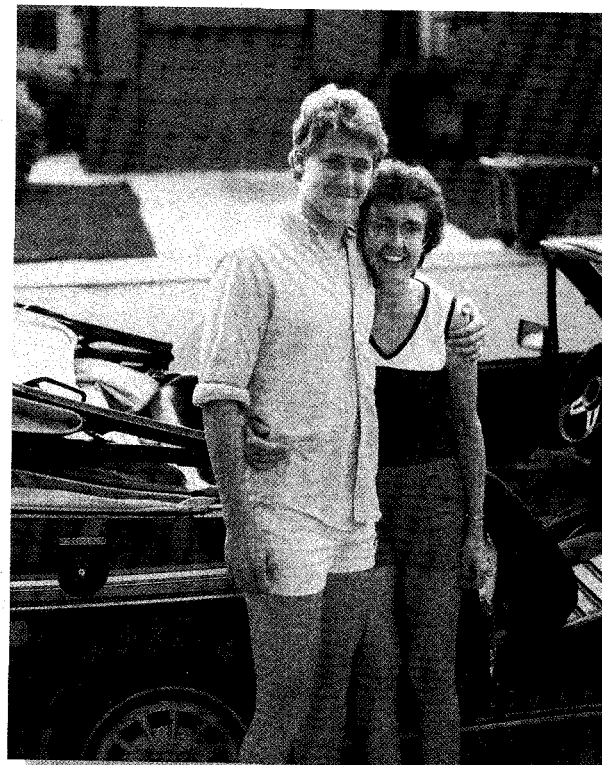
a shotgun by his stepbrother and another young man, at the urging of his stepmother.

Betty and Larry Gearheart's son Kyle was eighteen when he gave a ride to a young man he'd met working at the Price Chopper supermarket. Kyle's passenger killed him, took his car, and then went to a party, where he bragged about the murder.

Margaret and Bob Chase's son Gary was held up at gunpoint in a parking lot a few weeks

before his wedding. The robbers took his wallet, made him lie face down on the ground, and then shot him. Gary bled to death in the parking lot. His wallet contained one dollar.

Pat Foster's son, Sam, was a young father of two. On Halloween, Sam intervened in a dispute between two children over candy and was shot to death by a friend of one child's older brother.



**SIDNEY WELLS (LEFT),
SHOT TO DEATH AT AGE 22,
BOULDER, COLORADO,
1983**

For a few hours every month the families of these murder victims could rage against the injustice of the system, vent their anger at God, describe wild fantasies of revenge, share nightmares and panics, enjoy moments of black humor, and say whatever was on their minds without fear of being judged. The meetings allowed new members and old members to compare notes and put their grief into some perspective. New members got to see firsthand that others had suffered the same loss and kept on living. Long-time members were reminded, by the tumultuous grief after a recent murder, of just how far they had managed to come. And all of them found it odd that so much compassion, empathy, and giving could arise from the murderousness and ignorance outside the church walls.

CHARLIE Mae Bills attended her first POMC meeting six months after the murder of her only son, Oscar. She went to the meeting because she felt she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. She was crying for hours every day. Friends kept telling her to let go, to stop thinking





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AL SMITH COULD NOT BEAR THE THOUGHT OF ENTERING

about Oscar, but she could not understand what they meant. How could she let go of Oscar's memory? How could she ever forget her son? She would not even try. At her first POMC meeting Charlie Mae heard that other mothers were still crying ten years after a child's murder. Somehow that made her feel better—not completely out of her mind. Charlie Mae and Harriett Smith immediately took to each other and became dear friends. Both were nurses, more accustomed to taking care of other people than to looking after themselves.

Charlie Mae Bills was African-American, born and raised in Muskogee, Oklahoma. She and her husband, Oscar Bills Sr., met when they were in the sixth grade. They fell in love and got married in their early twenties. They moved to Kansas City in 1967 and bought a small house with a back yard extending to the wooded edge of a local park. Charlie Mae's husband worked as a maintenance man at the Lipton Tea factory. The couple had five children, four girls and a boy. Their neighbors were African-American working people, proud of their community, and for years nobody owned a burglar alarm or put metal bars on the windows.

On November 4, 1991, Oscar Bills Jr. was cleaning the windshield of his car at eight-thirty in the morning, getting ready to drop his wife off at school. She was studying to become an emergency-services medical technician. Oscar was twenty-one, recently married, and still living with his parents. As Oscar's wife stood at the front door, a car with four men inside it stopped near the house. The men wore ski masks. One of them pointed a semi-automatic handgun at Oscar and fired sixteen rounds in a matter of seconds. Oscar died instantly, and the car sped off.

The four men were neighborhood drug dealers. They believed that Oscar had snitched on them to the police. The police found the murder weapon and the getaway car but never made an arrest in the case. The drug dealer thought to have ordered Oscar's murder—who lived just a few blocks away—later sent word to the Bills family that the whole thing had been a mistake.

Charlie Mae was at the hospital, about to give medicine to a patient in the intensive-care unit, when her neighbor, Dora Downs, called her on the phone. "Mom," Dora said, calling Charlie Mae by her nickname, "Mom, you got to come home. Oscar's been shot." Charlie Mae said, "What?" and Dora started screaming, "He's dead, he's dead!" Charlie Mae threw down the phone and started to run. Staff members at the hospital grabbed her and restrained her. If they hadn't, she might have run all the way home—run for miles in her nurse's uniform. Another nurse, a good friend, drove Charlie Mae home. When they pulled up to

the house, Oscar was still lying in the driveway. Charlie Mae got out of the car and ran toward him, wanting to hold him, but the police stopped her. They would not let her touch him. They pulled her from the driveway and led her into the house. She stood in the kitchen, pressed up against the window, and stared at her son's body. Oscar was just lying there, alone on the pavement. No one had even bothered to cover him up.

Charlie Mae got angry. She went outside again and told the police she wanted to be with her son. This was her child, her only son, and she wanted to be with him. The officers allowed her past the yellow crime-scene tape, and then Charlie Mae sat on the ground, holding Oscar in her arms.

For weeks afterward Charlie Mae could not stop crying. The doctors gave her a cabinetful of pills, but she would not take them. She relived Dora's phone call to the intensive-care unit over and over again. Charlie Mae had to transfer to another wing of the hospital; being in the ICU made her think about that call. For the first time in her life she found herself questioning God. Her family had always been religious. How could God take away her only son? She had never prayed for selfish things; she had prayed only for the Lord to watch over her children. Oscar had just gotten married and had returned to their church. He was on the right track. She could not understand why God had done this. Despite her anger, Charlie Mae still got up every Sunday and went to church. But Oscar's wife could not forgive God. She had always been a good Christian; her uncle and both her grandfathers were ministers. After the murder Oscar's widow lost her faith in the Lord, left her church, dropped out of school, and became a crack addict.

Charlie Mae heard about POMC from Dora Downs. Dora's son had been murdered two years before. Dora still kept his truck in the driveway, as though the young man might return for it any day. Charlie Mae knew that feeling. She still expected, somehow, to hear Oscar's footsteps in the house, and to see his chubby legs running up the stairs. Right after the murder she would walk into a room, think of Oscar in it, and want to scream. Old friends told her to move, but she refused. The sadness was inside her; it would go wherever she did. This house was full of good memories. Oscar had died there, but he had also grown up there, playing happily for years in that same driveway.

Charlie Mae found it hard to spend time with Oscar's old friends, as they raised children and had weekend barbecues on their front lawns—things he would be doing now. For years after the murder she could not prepare holiday dinners, despite the pleas of her other children. She had always loved to cook, and then Oscar was murdered a few weeks before Thanksgiving. Charlie Mae's mother under-

ERRI'S HOUSE. "I'D RATHER BURN IT DOWN," HE SAID.

stood; she had made Oscar's favorite dish right before the murder, and she could not bear to make it ever again.

Charlie Mae became a corresponding secretary for the local POMC chapter. It was her job to mail special cards to members of the group, commemorating the anniversaries of their children's deaths. Oscar Bills Sr. did not like to speak about the murder and did not attend any POMC meetings with his wife. Indeed, Charlie Mae had never seen him cry. About a year after the murder she got angry at her husband and asked if he ever thought about Oscar. "There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about my boy," he answered. Recently he'd gone to the cemetery and gotten lost among the graves, unable to see clearly through his tears.

ALTHOUGH most of the murder victims in Kansas City were black, most of the people at the POMC meetings every month were white. Charlie Mae encouraged survivors from the African-American community to join POMC, but some preferred a support group that was based in the inner city. Others were simply afraid to go out at night. The racial disparity among Kansas City's murder victims was in keeping with the disproportionate effects of violence in the United States.

Although only a twelfth of the nation's population is African-American, more than half its murder victims are black. Perhaps one out of every twenty-five African-American men will eventually be murdered. A black man in America today is much more likely to die violently than a U.S. serviceman was during the Second World War. The high murder rate among African-Americans is not

**ASHLI KENNEDY, SHOT
TO DEATH AT AGE 2,
FRIENDSWOOD, TEXAS,
1994**



a recent phenomenon. Throughout this century it has been anywhere from eight to fifteen times as high as the murder rate among whites.

The long-term effects of poverty and racism are responsible for the carnage in black communities. During the first half of this century, however, many criminologists suggested that murder had a racial component—that blacks were inherently more murderous than whites. H. C. Brearley, the author of *Homicide in the United States* (1932), believed that the high murder rate among American blacks was due to traits peculiar to the race, claiming that in Africa "a lack of regard for the person and personality seems to have been almost characteristic." In the late 1950s the anthropologist Paul Bohannan decided to investigate whether there was any link between a person's race and the propensity to kill. He and a team of researchers examined the incidence of murder among tribal societies in East Africa that had not yet been severely disrupted by colonialism. Bohannan found that the murder rate in East Africa was not only lower than the murder rate in the United States but also comparable to the extremely low rates in Western Europe. The lethal violence in American society was caused by many complex factors—and innate racial characteristics were not among them.

WEIGHING THE THREAT

IN March of 1991 Gary Rawlings started to feel some of the old symptoms of his illness returning: depression, insomnia, lapses of memory. Rawlings thought that something was wrong with his medicine, and he complained to the owner of Smitty's Sit 'N Siesta. He was feeling "spacy," making stupid mistakes, wandering into the street in front of oncoming cars. She dismissed his concerns, as did the doctor used by the boardinghouse. The symptoms became worse.

Al and Harriett Smith continued to lobby hard for changes in Missouri law. Harry Wiggins, a Democratic state senator from Kansas City, introduced a bill incorporating their proposals, shifting the burden of proof in forensic cases to the patient seeking a release. The Department of Mental Health fought the bill, claiming that its passage would increase housing and staff costs by at least \$3 million a year. "If we have dangerous people in custody, we need to keep them off the street," Wiggins

told *The Kansas City Star*. "If it's going to cost us money, it's going to cost us money." Charlie Shields, a Republican state representative from St. Joseph, threw his support behind the bill. The state senate passed the legislation at 11:00 P.M. on May 16, the next to last night of its session; the house approved the bill the next day. The Smiths were ecstatic, hugging and dancing at the news. For the first time since Terri's murder the system had done something for them. They felt a sense of relief, as though a heavy burden were lifting. Gary Rawlings was scheduled to have another release hearing in July. The Smiths would finally head to the courtroom in St. Joseph with the law on their side.

On June 20 a caseworker at a Department of Mental Health workshop noticed that Gary Rawlings looked unwell. He had lost a lot of weight. Rawlings agreed to see the forensic psychiatrist who had first treated him at St. Joseph State Hospital. The psychiatrist quickly discovered that Rawlings was taking the wrong medicine. The doctor hired by Smitty's Sit 'N Siesta was a general practitioner. He had switched Rawlings's prescription in order to save money. For three months Rawlings had been fighting to keep hold of his sanity, taking ten milligrams—hardly a pediatric dose—of the wrong anti-psychotic drug every day.

The Smiths learned in July that Rawlings had been readmitted, voluntarily, to the forensic unit of St. Joseph State Hospital. The news seemed to confirm what they had been saying all along: this young man's treatment needed to be carefully supervised. Al and Harriett thought it was a blessing that the mistake had been discovered before anyone was hurt.

In December, Gary Rawlings applied for another conditional release. The Department of Mental Health supported his application, proposing that Rawlings be returned to Smitty's Sit 'N Siesta or placed in another private boardinghouse. The chief psychiatrist of the forensic unit at St. Joseph State Hospital submitted a report arguing forcefully that the young man should be released. Rawlings had shown great insight into his own illness, according to the psychiatrist. Rawlings had spotted the warning signs of psychosis and had immediately sought help. He felt remorse for the crime, exhibited no dangerous behavior, and deserved another chance to live outside the hospital. The psychiatric report was long and rambling. It attributed great significance to Rawlings's hairstyle and grooming in old family photographs. It failed to mention his extensive gun collection but noted with approval that as a young boy Rawlings had taken "pride in his pet." It praised the Department of Mental Health's role in Rawlings's recent recovery: "His mood brightened . . . because he knew he was in the hands of several professional trained social workers, psychologists, chaplains, nurses and psychiatrists all making correct decisions."

The conditional-release hearing was scheduled for February of 1992 and then postponed. The Jackson County Prose-

cutor's Office hired an independent forensic psychologist to examine Gary Rawlings. The Department of Mental Health sent a psychiatrist from the Biggs Forensic Center, at Fulton State, to interview Rawlings and write a new evaluation. The chief psychiatrist of the forensic unit at St. Joseph State Hospital had been given a medical leave: his report on Gary Rawlings was withdrawn. Both the new evaluations found that Rawlings was not delusional, thanks to the proper medication. His thinking was clear. He seemed free of any hostility or volatility. Gerald H. Vandenberg, the psychologist hired by the prosecutor's office, noted that Rawlings had responded evasively and deceptively to a number of questions, in an attempt to appear healthy and sane. This was interpreted as a good sign. "He has to have it somewhat together," Vandenberg observed, "to be able to lie that well."

The conditional-release hearing was held on April 21, 1992, with Judge Bill Roberts again presiding. Harriett testified about the need to keep Rawlings in a structured, supervised environment. Al acknowledged that by opposing this release the Smiths might provoke a violent response from Gary Rawlings. "We are old enough that we don't care if he does murder us," Al said. "He has already done so much to us, it could hardly be worse." After their testimony the Smiths were ushered out of the courtroom. Local newspapers had become interested in their story, and Karen King, the assistant attorney general representing Gary Rawlings and the Department of Mental Health, requested that the hearing be closed to the public. Judge Roberts felt obligated to close the courtroom; Missouri law guaranteed a mental patient's right to privacy. For the remainder of the hearing Al and Harriett sat on a bench in the hall.

Gary Rawlings's ex-wife, Maureen, testified for the first time in the case. She said that Rawlings had been calm and reserved during most of their marriage. Then he began to act strangely. He accused their dentist, a woman, of planting microphones in his teeth. He later threatened his ex-wife, the dentist, and others. Maureen said that she and her two children, who lived in Kansas, were terrified of Rawlings. He had recently sued for monthly visitation rights, and had won. She asked the court to deny his conditional release, fearing that he might try to harm her children. "I have no guarantees of their safety," she said.

At the end of the hearing Judge Roberts granted the conditional release. The young man's behavior prior to the murder was no longer relevant. The judge could take into account only what Rawlings had done, or had not done, since being committed to the mental hospital. The Department of Mental Health asserted that in the five years since the murder Rawlings had not made any threats, committed assault, tried to escape, set any fires, thrown objects, or displayed inappropriate sexual behavior. The Department of Mental Health's forensic psychiatrist and the prosecutor's forensic psychologist agreed that Rawlings did not seem



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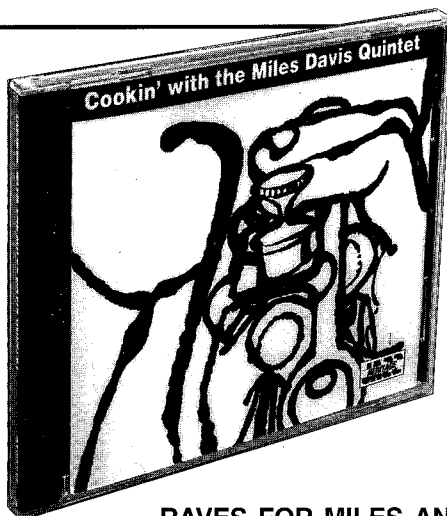
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likely in the near future to pose a threat to himself or to others. He could not be regarded as dangerous because of old threats and one violent act.

The Smiths were dejected. Despite all their hard work, Gary Rawlings was not just being released; he was moving closer to them. The Department of Mental Health was placing him in a state-run boardinghouse in Kansas City. His medication would be provided daily by the staff. He would be forbidden to drive a car or to own a weapon. Although the conditions of his release specified that Rawlings be kept under twenty-four-hour supervision, that requirement offered the Smiths little peace of mind. "Twenty-four-hour supervision" did not mean that someone would always be keeping an eye on him. It meant that Rawlings would always have to sign in and out of the building.

TIM'S MOTHER

PATTY Walters worked the late shift at the Hallmark Cards factory, making penny valentines. She was a single mother who adored her only child, Tim. On December 6, 1993, Tim left their house in Leavenworth, Kansas, about an hour outside Kansas City, to apply for a job at a meat-packing plant in Emporia. He was twenty years old, tall and handsome, a nationally ranked volleyball player who had dropped out of community college to find work in the real world. Patty was upset that her son was finally leaving home. They spent a great deal of time together, but she knew

**ANN HARRISON (CENTER),
RAPED AND STABBED
TO DEATH AT AGE 15,
KANSAS CITY,
MISSOURI, 1989**

he was ready to move on. She gave him a big hug good-bye. Tim called her from Emporia and said that everything looked great; he was going to get a company physical and come home the next day.

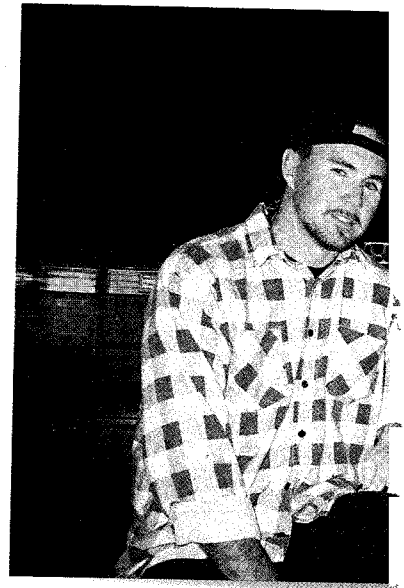
Just after midnight on December 10 Patty got a call at work. Tim was home, and had good news. He wanted to wait and tell his mother in person. They made plans to spend all of Saturday together. Patty got off work at eight o'clock on Friday morning, spent the day Christmas shopping in Kansas City, played a few rounds of the dice game Bunco with some friends, and then went to bed. In the middle of

the night she awoke to the sound of scraping on her bedroom window. The front door suddenly opened. Frightened by the noise, Patty grabbed for a weapon of some kind, looked up, and realized that the person who had entered her house was her mother. "What's wrong?" Patty asked. Her mother said, "I don't know how to tell you this." Patty instantly knew her son was dead and began to scream.

Tim had returned from Emporia, having gotten the meat-packing job, and had gone to a friend's house in Leavenworth to pick up a coat. When he arrived at his friend's house, two young men were breaking into a car parked on the street. The men jumped into their own car and sped off. Tim followed them for a few blocks, tried to get their

license-plate number, couldn't read it, gave up, and returned to his friend's place. A young man emerged from behind the house. While Tim stood beside his car, the man walked over and started a friendly conversation; then, without any warning, he struck Tim in the head with a blunt object—most likely a lead pipe or a tire iron. Tim said "Ah" and fell to the ground. The man struck him in the head again and again as he lay there. Tim never regained consciousness and died two hours later at the hospital.

For the next few days there was great potential for racial conflict in Leavenworth. Tim was white; his



**RANDY LUTZ, SHOT TO
DEATH AT AGE 28,
BARSTOW, CALIFORNIA,
1997**





guilty to Tim's murder and received a life sentence, making him eligible for parole in fifteen years. During his court appearance the killer was arrogant and unrepentant, smiling and throwing kisses to his girlfriend. Patty sat in the courtroom and sobbed throughout the hearing.

For months after the murder Patty thought about suicide. Tim had meant everything to her. He was her joy. Hallmark offered Patty all the time off that she needed, but she soon returned to work, trying to keep busy. At first she operated a machine by herself, thinking about Tim the whole time and crying. Then Hallmark assigned an older woman to work beside her, someone who provided a great deal of emotional support. Patty felt more comfortable at work than at home. She dreaded returning to her empty house, with its memories and pictures of Tim on the wall. Every night she would drive around for hours to avoid going home, and then finally get into bed and fall asleep crying.

Patty was too scared to speak at her first POMC meeting. But sitting there, listening to other survivors, made her feel better. It made her feel normal. She became a regular at the meetings. She found the nerve to join the conversation, welcoming the chance to say what was on her mind without fear of being criticized.

Patty also found consolation at her son's grave. During the first year after the murder she stopped by the cemetery two or three times a day. Usually she'd visit the grave for fifteen minutes or so. At other times, including his birthday, she would sit there all day. His birthday was in February, when the weather was harsh and cold. One thing she

killer was black. Dozens of Tim's friends armed themselves and went out into the night, driving around, looking for the murderer. Patty wanted them to stop, fearing that innocent people would get hurt. On the day of Tim's funeral, a gathering attended by hundreds, the police arrested the murderer—a twenty-four-year-old man who had served a few years in a California prison for assault with a deadly weapon. The killer pleaded

could not bear was the thought of snow covering Tim's body. Whenever it snowed, she had to visit the cemetery and clear off his grave. One day after a snowstorm she arrived and found that someone who knew how she felt had already removed the snow from Tim's grave.

RELEASE

EVERY six months or so Al and Harriett Smith drove to St. Joseph for another conditional-release hearing, and at almost every hearing Gary Rawlings gained more freedom. He won the right to live in his own apartment at a state-owned complex in Kansas City, to enjoy overnight passes, and to enroll at a vocational school just several blocks from Kathryn's house. Al and Harriett bitterly opposed the Department of Mental Health's efforts to place Rawlings in an auto-repair course at the TAD Technical Institute. Kansas City had many other vocational schools, they argued: TAD Technical was not only near Kathryn's

**DOUGLAS MELONSON
(CENTER), SHOT TO DEATH
AT AGE 19, DETROIT,
MICHIGAN, 1993**



home, it was also expensive, and the state would be paying. Judge Roberts allowed Rawlings to enroll at TAD Technical, but prohibited him from making contact with the Smiths or entering their neighborhood for any reason other than to attend classes.

While losing one battle after another in court, Al and Harriett were more successful at lobbying the state legislature. They had become leaders in the victims'-rights movement in Missouri, gaining the respect of many legislators. Largely because of Al and Harriett's work, laws were enacted that forced the courts to keep forensic release hearings open to the public, that eliminated the concept of "irresistible im-

pulse” from the insanity defense, and that required mental patients who had committed violent crimes to be housed in a secure facility until a court granted their release. The Smiths celebrated their greatest victory when the people of Missouri approved a victims’-rights amendment to the state constitution.

Over the years Gary Rawlings never harmed or threatened anyone, although he did commit minor violations of the terms governing his conditional release. Kathryn’s son Jason said he bumped into Rawlings in the automotive section of a store at about 1:30 A.M.—long after Rawlings’s curfew. A Department of Mental Health employee at Rawlings’s apartment complex was fired for encouraging him to break rules. Gun literature was found in Rawlings’s apartment and confiscated. At a deposition in May of 1994 Carol Kimball, his forensic caseworker, was asked if Rawlings fully understood the nature of his crime. “I believe that he knows intellectually that he did commit this crime and the other things surrounding it,” Kimball replied. “I don’t think he is—I personally don’t feel like he continues to realize the seriousness of it. The doctor, I think, has a different view.” Nevertheless, Kimball did not consider Gary Rawlings dangerous, so long as he was properly supervised.

In April of last year Rawlings filed a request for an eighth conditional release. Its terms would have allowed him to live anywhere in the Kansas City, Missouri, area, to operate a motor vehicle anywhere in the state, and to assume responsibility for taking his own medication. At the release hearing, in May, Bronwyn Werner, an assistant prosecutor from Jackson County, read aloud some passages from a letter that Rawlings had recently sent to a woman at the Department of Mental Health. The letter was bizarre and largely incoherent. Judge Roberts recessed the hearing to allow further consideration of Rawlings’s treatment.

A few weeks later the judge approved Rawlings’s conditional release, having revised some of its terms. Rawlings was required to take his medicine every day in the presence of an employee at the state-run apartment complex. Failure to appear for the medication would be grounds for terminating his release. He was forbidden to leave the state of Missouri except to visit his children, in Kansas, and was required to meet with a forensic caseworker at least once a month. He was forbidden to get in touch with the Smiths or to enter their neighborhood. If these conditions were faithfully obeyed, after six months Gary Rawlings was free to live wherever he chose in the state



of Missouri, as long as his forensic caseworker approved and the Jackson County Prosecutor’s Office was kept informed of his address.

When Harriett heard the judge’s decision, she said to herself, “Gary Rawlings is going home,” and then she thought about how Terri could never go home, about the injustice of that simple fact, and for the first time since the morning when her daughter’s body was discovered, Harriett broke down. The judge, the prosecutor, and Rawlings’s attorney appeared startled by her reaction. During almost a dozen hearings over the course of six years, Harriett had never let them see her cry. She had never lost control of her feelings. Now she sat in the courtroom and quietly wept, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

**PAMELA LAMOREAUX
(CENTER), RAPED AND
STRANGLED AT AGE 22,
COMMERCE, MICHIGAN,**

1987

THE UNGLAMOROUS

THE national headquarters of Parents of Murdered Children is located in a downtown-Cincinnati office building owned by the Catholic Church. POMC rents two small, windowless rooms in the basement. The rooms are crammed with filing cabinets and boxes of newsletters. The walls are decorated with photographs of the dead: wedding pictures, graduation pictures, vacation snapshots, glimpses of ordinary people from all over America, now murdered and gone. The telephones are constantly ringing. POMC has only three full-time staff members, who handle hundreds of murder-related calls a week, mainly from grieving family members. The group’s occupancy of these rooms prevents the archdiocese from using them as storage space or for meet-

EVERY RELATIVE FANTASIZES ABOUT REVENGE. BUT THE

ings. The POMC staff thinks that some members of the archdiocese consider the group's presence an inconvenience.

Ken Czillinger originally secured the office space for POMC, but he is no longer a Catholic priest. Frustrated by, among other things, the Church's resistance to change, Czillinger left the priesthood. He now works at a hospice in Cincinnati and looks after his younger brother, who suffers from Down syndrome.

Charlotte and Bob Hullinger both left POMC in 1986, having devoted eight years of their lives and much of their income to its establishment. Bob is still a Lutheran pastor. Charlotte went back to school, earned a master's degree, and started her own practice as a psychotherapist. On July 12 of this year the man who killed their daughter Lisa became the prime suspect in another murder case. Once again a woman who had rejected him was found beaten to death. As of this writing the killer remains at large.

For more than a decade Nancy Ruhe-Munch has served as POMC's executive director. Ruhe-Munch is tall and blonde and just turned fifty. She is a formidable woman with a quick mind, a firm handshake, an intense passion for her work, and a dark, exuberant sense of humor—which allows her to hear about brutal murders every day and still maintain her sanity. As the executive director of an understaffed organization, Ruhe-Munch must play many roles. At various times during an average day she is a grief counselor, a fundraiser, an activist, an office manager, even an amateur detective. Among other services, POMC provides survivors with an outside opinion on how well their case was handled by local authorities. Ruhe-Munch has assembled a group of law-enforcement experts, including medical examiners and homicide detectives, who scrutinize the evidence in a POMC member's case. She has gained a working knowledge not only of bereavement but also of ballistics, forensic pathology, and homicide-investigation techniques. Her daily mail contains grateful letters from victims' families, petitions seeking to block murderers' parole, snippets for the POMC newsletter, autopsy reports, and glossy full-color photographs of bloody crime scenes.

Parents of Murdered Children has about 200 local chapters. Roughly 15,000 friends and relatives of murder victims attend its meetings every year, free of charge. Raising money for POMC is a constant struggle. Last year the national office operated on a budget of less than \$200,000, most of it donated in small amounts by the membership. The group's leading benefactor is an anonymous businessman in Dayton, Ohio, who sends an annual check for \$7,500 in memory of a murdered family member. Helping America's grieving parents lacks the cachet of saving distant rain forests. Nancy Ruhe-Munch has tried, without success, to gain support from the Junior League and other organizations. The clients served by POMC are not

easy to celebrate at a charity benefit. They are less likely to be glamorous than to be angry, distraught, and in pain. A few years ago, when Ruhe-Munch won an award for her work with crime victims, she donated the entire \$10,000 prize to POMC. Another POMC board member, Harry J. Bonnell, the chief deputy medical examiner of San Diego County, later won the same award and likewise gave the prize money to POMC.

Nancy Ruhe-Munch finds it a challenge to attract volunteers. Only seven people responded to a recent want ad in the newspaper, and none stayed at POMC for long. Ruhe-Munch knows firsthand how the job can take its toll: last year she suffered a minor stroke and developed heart problems. Counselors who work with the relatives of murder victims are at high risk for developing symptoms of PTSD. Many eventually burn out. Ruhe-Munch has lost a lot of old friends who don't want to hear about her work. Her husband is loving and supportive, but even he can't listen to her stories. They upset him too much. Thinking about murder all day has left its mark on Ruhe-Munch. She can no longer watch the news on television or read the newspaper. She listens to the news on the radio; for some reason it is less upsetting that way. She gets nervous in convenience stores and fast-food restaurants, where so many murders take place. She always needs to know where the exits are. She worries about her children and her grandchildren, and she tries never to take anything for granted.

Although Ruhe-Munch finds her work immensely rewarding, many aspects are not easy. Speaking to the fathers of murder victims is one of her most difficult tasks. She senses an awful mixture of sadness and denial in their voices. "You hear them choking back the tears," she says, "and then you hear them say, 'I'm calling for my wife; she's not doing well . . .' And I'll say, 'Well, how are you doing?' And they'll say, 'I'm doing just fine, but I'm concerned about her.'" Often that grieving father, that loving husband, is dead within a few years, killed by cancer or a heart attack.

The violent revenge movies made in Hollywood have little in common with what happens in real life. Ruhe-Munch cannot recall a single instance in which a POMC member has committed an act of violence against the murderer of a loved one. Almost every relative of a murder victim fantasizes about seeking vengeance. But the vast majority of Americans are unwilling to kill, no matter how great their anger and outrage. A number of POMC members have taken their own lives, however. One young mother went to the cemetery and committed suicide on her son's grave.

Nancy Ruhe-Munch is not the parent of a murdered child. Before joining POMC she worked for years at a rape-crisis and battered-women's center. She thinks the women's movement and the victims'-rights movement have much in common. "In the 1970s," she says, "the women's movement

VAST MAJORITY OF AMERICANS ARE UNWILLING TO KILL.

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fought—and I was one of those who fought—to bring respect to the victims of rape and of sexual abuse. Those were crimes of power over women. Well, murder is the ultimate crime of power over women—over all human beings. The victims of murder deserve respect too.”

A few years ago POMC launched a project called *Murder Is Not Entertainment*, a letter-writing campaign aimed at businesses that exploit murder for profit. Ruhe-Munch is appalled by America’s obsession with murder, by the false and insensitive depiction of violence in our popular culture. The murders manufactured by Hollywood tend to be scary, exciting, disgusting, ironic, or amusing—but rarely tragic. Fictional serial killers have become popular movie heroes, and their fans have grown fascinated with the real thing. A number of companies produce serial-killer trading cards. Each card bears the picture of a real serial killer on one side and an account of the murders on the other. There are also victim trading cards. Serial killers now have several Web sites dedicated to them. Songs about serial killers are recorded by heavy-metal bands. The faces of serial killers appear on T-shirts sold through a mail-order catalogue devoted to murder memorabilia. Paintings and other artwork by serial killers are collected by Hollywood celebrities. One art dealer, who is also a funeral director, specializes in the work of serial killers.

The popularity of murder games and murder-mystery weekends infuriates Nancy Ruhe-Munch. She cannot view them as innocent amusements. “Can you imagine having a child-abuse game?” she asks. “Can you imagine having a rape mystery game? Everyone has to guess who’s the serial rapist?” The families of murder victims, she argues, ought to be treated with more consideration and tact; society would never tolerate games and parties that trivialized other violent crimes. POMC has protested against games like *How to Host a Murder* and *How to Kill Your Boss*. It has sent angry letters to companies such as Safeway and Campbell Soup, which have used murder in a promotion. The culture of murder seems to have permeated every nook and cranny in America. “We even heard about a battered-women’s center,” Ruhe-Munch says, “that staged a murder game to raise money.”

Hundreds of people from all over the United States gather every year for the POMC annual conference. Many are chapter leaders; some are survivors encountering POMC for the first time. The conference features grief workshops and lectures on the criminal-justice system. The highlight of the weekend is a memorial dinner held in a hotel ballroom. The tables are jammed with the mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, husbands, wives, and children of murder victims—people from Battle Creek, Michigan, and Appleton, Minnesota, from Phoenix, Arizona, and Opa-Locka, Florida, from Beaverton, Oregon, and Brooklyn, New York. The sounds of laughter and loud conversation fill the room, members look for old friends at other tables, and waiters hurry to gather plates at the end of each course.

After dinner the lights are dimmed. A band plays the POMC theme song, “We Are the Survivors,” and a slide show begins. One after another the faces of murder victims are projected onto a large screen—hundreds of faces, most of them young. This could be a slide show at a college reunion, cheery and nostalgic, except all these young people are dead. The effect is overwhelming. The convivial spirit of a typical American convention gives way to the sorrows of a congregation of the damned. As the face of each murder victim appears, a family member lights a candle. Before long the ballroom is full of grown men and women who are crying, lit by flickering candlelight, in a modern ritual that oddly evokes the ancient meaning of the word “victim”: one who is sacrificed.

UNTIL recently Gary Rawlings lived with his father and worked as an automobile mechanic. The young man’s mental illness and the murder he committed have greatly affected his family. “It’s been devastation,” Gary Rawlings Sr. says. “My family has fell all apart. I don’t know where my wife is. She couldn’t face it. Nobody’s heard from her in probably five or six years.” Gary was a bright boy; his parents had big hopes for him, and those hopes were “snuffed out.” The young man’s children have suffered terribly, caught in an ugly battle over visitation rights and taunted mercilessly by schoolmates. Media accounts of the crime and of the hearings forced the children to switch schools. Gary Rawlings Sr. worries about his grandchildren’s future, about whether they will someday develop schizophrenia, which tends to run in families. “My worst nightmare that I could imagine has come true in my life,” he says. “Hell is here on earth.”

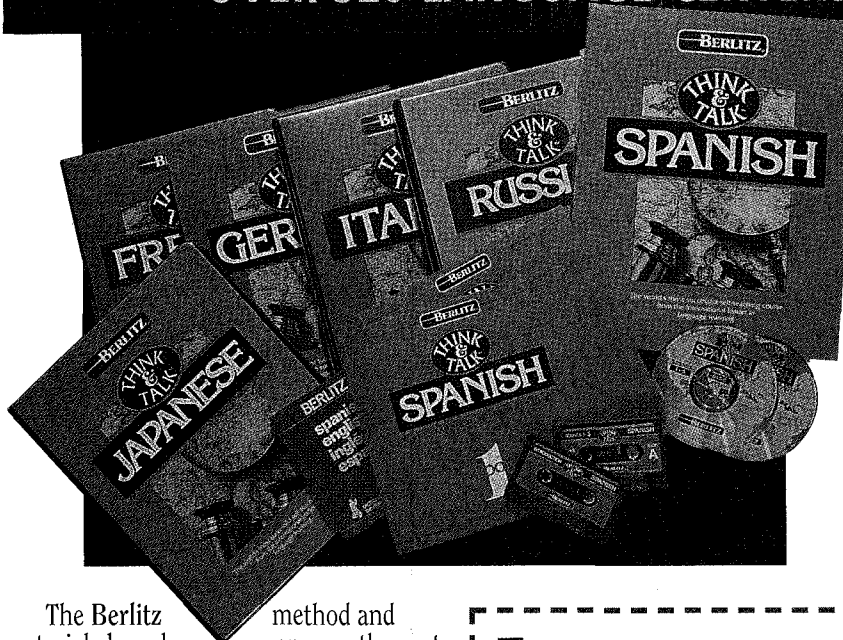
Gary Rawlings Jr. is no serial killer, according to his father, and poses no great threat to society: he is just a shy, “passive” young man. The murder was a tragedy, pure and simple. “In a nutshell, what I see are two gentle, quiet people who loved each other,” Gary Rawlings Sr. says. “Unfortunately, one of them was sick. And one of them perished. It should never have happened. I feel the disease killed Terri. Maybe it’s because I’m the father, but I just can’t believe if my boy was [feeling] right, he’d do anything like that.”

Like many paranoid schizophrenics, Gary Rawlings Jr. lives in constant fear of becoming sick again and of being kept in a mental hospital. “He’s afraid of everything,” his father claims. “He’s afraid of the Smiths. Why, I think he’s more afraid of them than they are of him. Who has the most fear? He does. And when he’s sick, of course, he hallucinates that people are after him, that somebody’s trying to hurt him.” In the absence of proper medication, a psychotic state gradually descends on the young man, like a dream. The voices and delusions feel real to him at the time, but later, when he emerges from the psychosis, it feels like waking up from a strange, terrible dream.

Gary Rawlings Sr. shares the Smiths’ anger at the Missouri Department of Mental Health. The treatment of his son’s ill-

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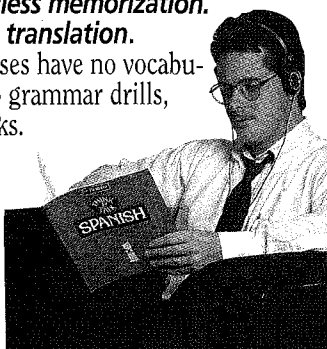
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DONNA GENE FERGUSON
(SECOND FROM LEFT),
STABBED TO DEATH
AT AGE 18, PORTLAND,
OREGON, 1992

ness has in some ways been reminiscent of the Dark Ages. "Well, here's a perfect example of what happened," Gary Rawlings Sr. says. "They put him on the wrong medication. But when he complains about it, they tell him he don't know nothing. In other words—shut up. He gets sick and he readmits himself to the hospital. Then they treat him as if he tried to escape. They put him in the most secure place and overmedicate him, to where he can't even stand up. The whole system came down on him, when he readmitted himself! And instead of praising him, he was punished. I was furious at them."

When Rawlings becomes psychotic, he gets a certain look in his eyes. "I can see it right away," his father claims. If he'd known that his son might hurt Terri, he would have gone straight to her house and grabbed him. Gary Rawlings Sr. regrets his difficulty in communicating with the Smiths: "I'd like to, but I don't know what to say. What do you say? What do you say when something like this happens? I know where the Smiths are coming from. I might do the same thing they've done if it was my daughter."

CARL P. Malmquist is a prominent forensic psychiatrist. He is the author of *Homicide: A Psychiatric Perspective* (1996) and a professor of social psychiatry at the University of Minnesota. He teaches a course called Killing. Malmquist prefers not to comment on the Rawlings case. Nevertheless, he warns that the behavior of any paranoid schizophrenic outside a mental hospital is difficult to predict. Maintaining the proper medication does not guarantee nonviolent behavior. A Swedish study of schizophrenics found that only a third of

their violent acts were committed during a psychotic episode. The "impaired interpersonal relations" of many schizophrenics—their tendency, for example, to treat people as objects—may be more responsible for their violence than any hallucinations or delusions. Malmquist believes that the United States is in the midst of a vast social experiment: little research has been conducted on the possible link between violence and mentally ill people who have been de-institutionalized. He warns that psychiatrists and other mental-health professionals are not very good at making long-term predictions about the behavior of mental patients who have committed violent crimes.

Indeed, statistical methods of predicting violent behavior over the long term are consistently more accurate

than clinical methods. A recent survey of the academic literature concluded that psychiatrists and other clinicians can at best predict violence with only slightly more accuracy than mere chance. A number of studies have suggested that mental-health professionals have no proven ability to predict the long-term dangerousness of released mental patients.

Richard N. Gowdy is the director of forensic services for the Missouri Department of Mental Health. Confidentiality laws prevent him from discussing Gary Rawlings's case. Gowdy believes that the changes in state law gained by the Smiths merely codify what his department has been doing all along. In forensic cases, he says, "public safety is our top priority." When a patient found not guilty by reason of insanity applies for a conditional release, a review committee composed of psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, and administrators collects extensive information on the case. The committee takes into account the nature of the crime, the patient's clinical response to treatment, behavior in



KATHY MASSEY, SHOT TO
DEATH AT AGE 38, VIENNA,
GEORGIA, 1997

the hospital setting, the response to medication, the response to nonmedical therapies, and any mitigating factors. If the patient has committed a dangerous act, the case receives an independent review at the department's central office. "It's important to note," Gowdy adds, "that we don't control conditional releases. That's entirely a judicial determination." Gowdy thinks that the mental-health system has certain advantages over the correctional system when it comes to supervising people who may prove dangerous. A convicted felon receives a finite punishment, whereas a forensic patient is committed indefinitely to the Department of Mental Health. A conditional release can always be revoked. According to Gowdy, the recidivism rate of forensic patients released by his department is lower than the recidivism rate nationwide for violent offenders released from prison.

The recidivism rate of America's violent offenders, however, is hardly a good measure of success. A convicted murderer in the United States is released after spending, on average, just six years in prison. A study by the Justice Department found that a fifth of all convicted murderers released from prison were arrested within three years for another violent crime. About a third of that group were arrested for another killing. A convicted murderer who has been released from prison is hundreds of times as likely to kill as an ordinary citizen. At the moment there are about 100,000 convicted murderers locked up in America's prisons—and perhaps 800,000 murderers living free in American society. The United States has more murderers than doctors, more murderers than college professors. It has more murderers than police officers.

ON January 3 of this year the Kansas City chapter of Parents of Murdered Children met for the first time since 1993 without Harriett Smith as its leader. As the tenth

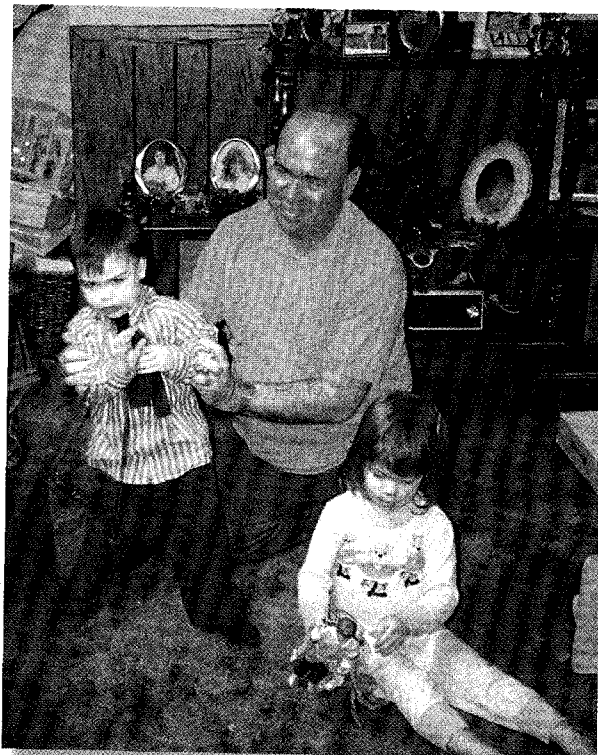
anniversary of Terri's death approached, Harriett decided to step down. She felt that the group would be invigorated by new leadership. Patty Walters was chosen for the job. Patty was making great progress; her grief had entered a new phase.

Patty now finds visiting her son's grave more painful than comforting. She goes there much less often and stays only briefly. Instead of visiting her son's grave, she speaks into a tape recorder

every night, and it feels as if she is talking to Tim, telling him about her day.

Charlie Mae Bills recently gave up her post as a POMC corresponding secretary. The job had become oppressive. The sympathy cards were a constant reminder of other killings. Summers are still hard for her: everyone's kids are playing outside, laughing and having fun. They make her think about Oscar. But last November, for the first time since his murder, Charlie Mae cooked Thanksgiving dinner.

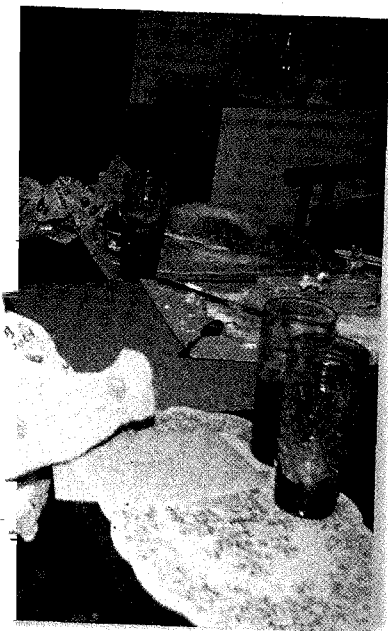
Al and Harriett still attend every POMC meeting. He still writes the newsletter. They still take phone calls at all hours



**MICHAEL LYM, SHOT TO
DEATH AT AGE 37,
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, 1995**

of the day and night. They attend murder trials on behalf of the victims' families and lobby hard to change various laws. They believe that people found not guilty by reason of insanity should in some way be held accountable for their actions. In the psychiatric ward where Harriett once worked, patients who threw food in the cafeteria were reprimanded and asked to apologize; the Smiths think that murderers should be asked to do at least that much. Despite having killed Terri, Gary Rawlins Jr. does not have a criminal record.

Al and Harriett are strong supporters of the proposed Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Although thirty states have adopted some sort of victims' rights amendment, these rights have proved difficult to enforce. A federal amendment would finally give victims' rights a constitutional basis. It would guarantee crime victims and the relatives of murder victims the right to be noti-



fied, to be present, and to be heard. The Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment has been endorsed by both political parties and by President Bill Clinton. But it has been stalled in the Senate Judiciary Committee for more than a year and has yet to reach Congress for a vote.

The Smiths vow to attend Gary Rawlings's conditional-release hearings for as long as they live. They feel obliged not only to honor their daughter's memory but also to try to prevent Rawlings from ever hurting anyone else. They do not trust the Missouri Department of Mental Health, nor do they believe that Rawlings is harmless. "His demeanor in the courtroom is one of absolute arrogance," Harriett says. "He has never once spoken to any of us or even acknowledged that he killed a member of our family." The Smiths worry that Rawlings still has access to the likely murder weapon—a sophisticated semi-automatic pistol. The Department of Mental Health has never demanded, as a condition of his release, that Rawlings hand over the murder weapon or reveal its whereabouts.

On June 4 of this year Rawlings failed to appear for his medication. It was the night before his latest release hearing, and a local television-news crew had parked outside his father's house, hoping to speak with him and interviewing the neighbors. Rawlings later claimed that the stress of the upcoming hearing and of the media attention caused him to forget about taking his medicine. He also claimed that his forensic caseworker had been "badgering" him for months. As of this writing Gary Rawlings Jr. is in a Kansas City mental hospital, seeking another conditional release.

During the first few years after Terri's murder Kathryn was hospitalized three times for depression and for symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. She slowly regained her confidence and rebuilt her life. She left the post office, found a much better job, and started to work as a volunteer at Rose Brooks, a local shelter for battered women. Kathryn had hauled many of Terri's belongings out of her basement and donated them to the shelter. Rose Brooks felt like the right place for Terri's things. She had been a victim of domestic violence; now other victims might benefit from what she left behind.

Kathryn still desperately misses her sister. And she still lives in fear of Gary Rawlings. "I see him as a manipulator who's learned how to work the system," she says. Her older son, Jason, is not afraid of Rawlings. "If he tries anything," Jason warns, "he'll regret it." Her younger son, Billy, feels less confident. Thoughts of Rawlings are never far from his mind. "I'm still afraid that he's plotting our deaths right now," Billy says. "I'm afraid he blames my family for his

problems. I keep thinking that he's going to kill us one by one, that I'll come home someday and my mom will be dead, and he'll be hiding in the shadows."

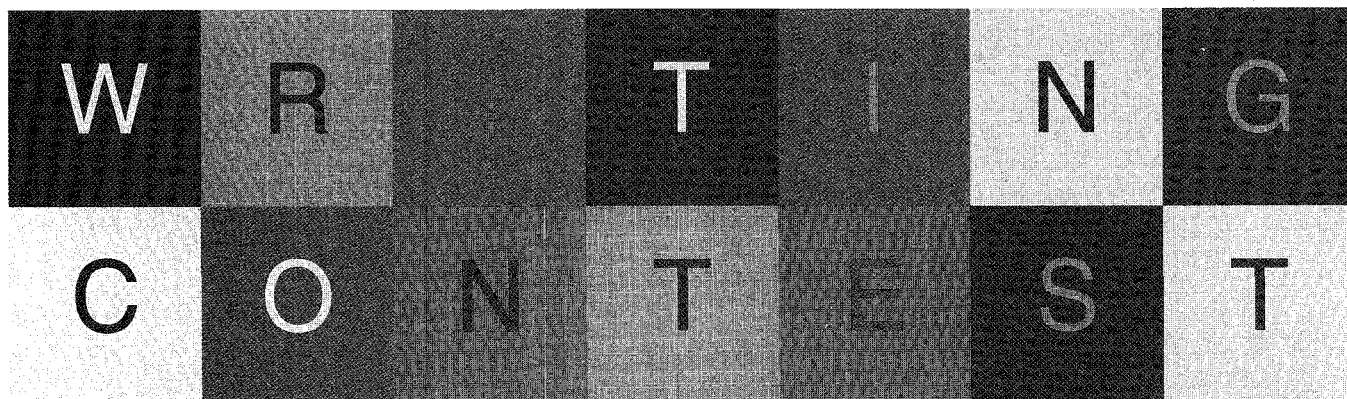
Without any warning, in a quiet moment, Harriett sometimes feels Terri's presence. "All of a sudden something will wash over me," she says, "and I can hear Terri say, 'It's going to be okay, Mom.'" Ten years after the murder Harriett still relives the scene in front of Terri's house that morning. "I replay it over and over and over and over," she says. "But the pain isn't as bad now. In grief you need to reach a point where it's just a reality. You need to face the reality. And that's how the scene plays out in my mind now. It is a reality."

Harriett still thinks about Terri lying alone in that house for days while her family worried. Nobody knew where Terri was—and she was only a few blocks away. Harriett woke up, got dressed, went to work at the hospital, ate meals, did errands, and spoke to friends while her daughter lay alone in that house. One of Harriett's greatest regrets is that she could not be with Terri when she died. Harriett had sat beside so many patients during their last hours, yet she could not be there for her daughter. "I so often wish that Gary would have just called me after he shot her," Harriett says. "I know that sounds stupid, but that's the way I feel. It's been real hard for me not knowing exactly when she died, not knowing if she suffered. That's part of life. Terri's death was a part of her life. I can remember when we brought Terri home from the hospital. I can remember when she took her first steps. I can remember her first day of school. I just wish I could have been there for her when she died."

On the first Friday evening of every month, at 7:30 sharp, the group meets in the little parish hall at Our Lady of Sorrows. There are new faces at every meeting, sometimes five or six new faces. Like clockwork, the killing goes on, not just in Kansas City but in every city, north and south, east and west, all over the country. Young men and women are beaten, stabbed, strangled, and shot, relentlessly, day and night. Another murder is committed in America every twenty-four minutes or so, each one with its own explanation, yet all of them linked somehow, interconnected, part of the national condition. Every day brings more victims, more burials, more parents of murdered children—an unending funeral procession, slow-moving and black lines, all over the country. Perhaps four or five Americans were murdered while you read this. As each life ends, another family's grief begins, and the killing goes on, like clockwork, and the blood flows. ☙

*The photographs that appear throughout this article were provided by the families of murder victims.
We are grateful for their generous cooperation.*

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The Banks of the Vistula

by REBECCA LEE

IT was dusk; the campus had turned to velvet. I walked the brick path to Humanities, which loomed there and seemed to incline toward me, as God does toward the sinner in the Book of Psalms. It was late on a Friday afternoon, when the air is fertile, about to split and reveal its warm fruit—that gold nucleus of time, the weekend.

Inside, up the stairs, the door to Stasselova's office was open, and the professor lifted his head. "Oh," he said. "Yes." He coughed, deep in his lungs, and motioned me in. He had requested this visit earlier in the day, following class. His course was titled Speaking in Tongues: Introductory Linguistics. Stasselova was about sixty-five and a big man, his torso an almost perfect square. Behind his balding head the blond architecture of St. Gustav College rose into the cobalt sky. It looked like a rendition of thought itself, rising out of the head in intricate, heartbreaking cornices that became more abstract and complicated as they rose.

I was in my third week of college. I loved every moment of it, every footfall. The students resembled the students I'd known in high school, Scandinavian midwesterners like myself, whose fathers were all pastors or some declension thereof—but the professors thrilled me. Most had come from the East Coast, and seemed fragile and miserable in the Midwest. Occasionally during class you could see hope for us rising in them, and then they would look like great birds flying over an uncertain landscape, asking mysterious questions, trying to lead us somewhere we could not yet go.

I wanted to be noticed by them, to distinguish myself from the ordinary mass of students, and to this end I had plagiarized my first paper for Stasselova's class. This was why, I presumed, he had called me to his office.

The paper, titled "The Common Harvest," was on the desk between us.

How could she win an argument
against somebody with an early training in
propaganda? She had to resort finally
to the truth, that rinky-dink little boat in
the great sea of persuasion





I had found it in the Kierkegaard Library. It was a chapter in an old green-cloth book that was so small I could palm it. The book had been written in 1945, by a man named Delores Tretsky, and it hadn't been signed out since 1956. I began to leaf through it, and then crouched down to read. I read for a full hour; I thought it beautiful. I had not once in all my life stopped for even a moment to consider grammar, to wonder how it rose out of history like a wing unfurling.

I had intended to write my own paper, to synthesize, as Stasselova had suggested, my own ideas with the author's, but I simply had nothing to contribute. It seemed even rude to combine this work with my own pale, unemotional ideas. So I lifted a chapter, only occasionally dimming some passages that were too fine, too blinding.

"This is an extraordinary paper," he said. He was holding his coffee cup over it, and I saw that coffee had already spilled on the page to form a small, murky pond.

"Thank you," I said.

"It seems quite sophisticated. You must not have come here straight out of high school."

"I did," I said.

"Oh. Well, good for you."

"Thanks."

"You seem fully immersed in a study of oppression. Any reason for this?"

"Well, I do live in the world."

"Yes, that's right. And you say here—a shocking line—that a language must sometimes be repressed, and replaced, for the larger good. You believe this?"

"Yes."

"You think that the Eastern-bloc countries should be forced to speak, as you say here, the mother tongue?"

Some parts of the paper I had just copied down verbatim, without really understanding, and now I was stuck with them. Now they were my opinions. "Yes," I said.

"You know I am from that region."

"Is that right?"

"From Poland."

"Whereabouts in Poland?" I asked conversationally.

"I was born on the edge of it, in the dark forest land along its northeastern border, before the Soviet Union took it over completely, burning our towns. As children we were forced to speak Russian, even in our homes, even when we said good-night to our mothers as we fell asleep."

This was turning into a little piece of bad luck.

"When did you write this?" he asked.

"Last week."

"It reads like it was written fifty years ago. It reads like Soviet propaganda."

"Oh," I said. "I didn't mean it that way."

"Did somebody help you?"

"Actually, yes. Certainly that's all right?"

"Of course, if done properly. Who was it that helped you, a book or a person?"

"My roommate helped me," I said.

"Your roommate. What is her name?"

"Solveig."

"Solveig what?"

"Solveig Juliusson."

"Is she a linguistics scholar?"

"No, just very bright."

"Maybe I can talk to Solveig myself?"

"Unfortunately, you can't."

"Why not?"

"It's complicated."

"In what way?"

"Well, she's stopped eating. She's very thin. Her parents were worried, so they took her home."

"Where does she live?"

"I don't know."

We both sat silent. Luckily, I had experience lying in my adolescence, and knew it was possible to win even though both parties were aware of the lie. The exercise was not a search for truth but rather a test of exterior reserve.

"I'm sure she'll be returning soon," I said. "I'll have her call you."

Stasselova smiled. "Tell her to eat up," he said, his sarcasm curled inside his concern.

"Okay," I said. I got up and hoisted my bag over my shoulder. As I stood, I could see the upper edge of the sun falling down off the hill on which St. Gustav was built. I'd never seen the sun from this angle before, from above as it fell, as it so obviously lit up another part of the world, perhaps even flaming up the sights of Stasselova's precious, oppressed Poland, its dark contested forests and burning cities, its dreamy and violent borders.

MY roommate Solveig was permanently tan. She went twice a week to a tanning salon and bleached her hair frequently, so that it looked like radioactive foliage growing out of dark, moody sands. Despite all this she was very beautiful, and sensible.

"Margaret," she said when I came in that evening. "The library telephoned to recall a book. They said it was urgent."

I had thought he might check the library. "Okay," I said. As I rifled through the clothes on my closet floor, I decided it would have to be burned. I would finish the book and then I

would burn it. But first there was tonight, and I had that rare thing, a date.

My date was from Stasselova's class. His name was Hans; he was a junior, and his father was a diplomat. He had almost auburn hair that fell to his neckline. He wore, always, long white shirts whose sleeves were just slightly, almost imperceptibly, puffed at the shoulders, like an elegant little joke, and very long, so they hung over his hands. I thought he was articulate, kind. I had in a moment of astonishment asked him out.

The night was soft and warm. We walked through the tiny town, wandered its thin river. We ate burgers. He spoke of Moscow, where he had lived that summer. I had spent my childhood with a vision of Russia in the distance, an anti-America, a sort of fairy-tale intellectual prison. But this was 1987, the beginning of *perestroika*, of *glasnost*, and views of Russia were changing. Television showed a country of rain and difficulty and great humility, and Gorbachev was always bowing to sign something or other, his head bearing a mysterious stain shaped like a continent one could almost but not quite identify. I said to Hans that I wanted to go there myself, though I had never thought of the idea before that moment. He said, "You can if you want." We were in his small, iridescent apartment by now. "Or perhaps to Poland," I said, thinking of Stasselova.

"Poland," Hans said. "Yes. What is left of it, after men like Stasselova."

"What do you mean, men like Stasselova?"

"Soviet puppets."

"Yet he is clearly anti-Soviet," I said.

"Now, yes. Everybody is anti-Soviet now." The sign for the one Japanese restaurant in town cast a worldly orange light into the room, carving Hans's body into geometric shapes. He took my hand, and at that moment the whole world seemed to have entered his apartment. I found him intelligent, deliberate, large-hearted. "Now," he said, "is the time to be anti-Soviet."

ON Monday afternoon, in class, Hans sat across from me. We were all sitting around a conference table, waiting for Stasselova. Hans smiled. I gave him the peace sign across the table. When I looked back at him, moments later, Hans's hands were casually laid out on the table, palms down. I saw then, for the first time, that his left hand tapered into only three fingers, which were fused together at the top knuckle. The hand looked delicate, surprising. I had not noticed this on our date, and now I wondered if he had purposely kept me from seeing it, or if I had somehow just missed it. For a brief, confused moment, I even wondered if the transformation had occurred between then and now. Hans looked me squarely in the eye. I smiled back.

Stasselova then entered the room. In light of my date with Hans, I had almost forgotten my visit with him the previous Friday. I'd meant to burn the book over the weekend in the

darkness at the ravine, though I dreaded this. My mother was a librarian, and I knew that the vision of her daughter burning a book would have been like a sledgehammer to the heart.

Throughout the class Stasselova seemed to be speaking directly to me, still chastising me. His eyes kept resting on me disapprovingly. "The reason for the sentence is to express the verb—a change, a *desire*. But the verb cannot stand alone; it needs to be supported, to be realized by a body, and thus the noun—just as the soul in its trajectory through life needs to be comforted by the body."

The sun's rays slanted in on Stasselova as he veered into very interesting territory. "All things in revolution," he said, "in this way, need protection. For instance, when my country, Poland, was annexed by the Soviet Union, we had the choice of joining what was called Berling's army, the Polish wing of the Russian army, or the independent Home Army. Many considered it anti-Polish to join the Russian army, but I believed, as did my comrades, that more could be done through the system, within the support of the system, than without."

He looked at me. I nodded. I was one of those students who nod a lot. His eyes were like brown velvet under glass. "This is the power of the sentence," he said. "It acts out this drama of control and subversion. The noun always stands for what is, the status quo, and the verb for what might be, the ideal."

Across the table Hans's damaged hand, spindly and nervy, drummed impatiently on the tabletop. I could tell he wanted to speak up. Stasselova turned to him. "That was the decision I made," he said. "Years ago. Right or wrong, I thought it best at the time. I thought we could do more work for the Polish cause from within the Red Army than from outside it."

Hans's face was impassive. He suddenly looked years older—austere, cold, priestly. Stasselova turned then to look at me. This was obviously an issue for him, I thought, and I nodded as he continued to speak. I really did feel supportive. Whatever army he thought was best at the time, that was fine with me.

IN the evening I went to the ravine in the elm forest, which lay curled around the hill on which the campus was built. This forest seemed deeply peaceful to me, almost conscious. I didn't know the reason for this at the time—that many elms in a forest can spring from a single tree. In this case a single elm had divided herself into a forest, an individual with a continuous DNA in whose midst one could stand and be held.

The ravine cut through like an old emotional wound. I crouched on its bank and glanced at the book one last time. I flicked open my lighter. The book caught fire instantly. As the flame approached my hand, I arced the book into the murky water. It looked spectacular, a high wing of flame rising from it. Inside, in one of its luminous chapters, I had read that the ability to use language and the ability to tame fire arose from the same warm, shimmering pool of genes,

since in nature they did not appear one without the other.

As I made my way out of the woods and into the long silver ditch that lined the highway, I heard about a thousand birds cry, and I craned my neck to see them lighting out from the tips of the elms. They looked like ideas would if released suddenly from the page and given bodies—shocked at how blood actually felt as it ran through the veins, as it sent them wheeling into the west, wings raking, straining against the requirements of such a physical world.

I RETURNED and found Solveig turning in the lamp-light. Her hair was piled on her head, so unnaturally blonde it looked ablaze, and her face was bronze. She looked a thousand years old. "Some guy called," she said. "Stasselova or something."

He called again that night, at nearly midnight. I thought this unseemly.

"So," he said. "Solveig's back."

"Yes," I said, glancing at her. She was at her mirror, performing some ablution on her face. "She's much better."

"Perhaps the three of us can now meet."

"Oh," I said, "it's too early."

"Too early in what?"

"In her recovery." Solveig wheeled her head around to look at me. I smiled, shrugged.

"I think she'll be okay."

"I'm not so sure."

"Listen," he said. "I'll give you a choice: you can either rewrite the paper in my office, bringing in whatever materials you need, or the three of us can meet and clear this up."

"Fine, we'll meet you."

"You know my hours."

"I do." I hung up and explained to Solveig what had happened—Stasselova's obsession with language and oppression, my plagiarism, the invocation of her name. Solveig nodded and said of course, whatever she could do she would.

WHEN we arrived that Wednesday, the light had almost gone from his office but was still lingering outside the windows, like the light in fairy tales, rich and creepy.

Solveig was brilliant. Just her posture, as she sat in the narrow chair, was enough initially to chasten Stasselova. In her presence men were driven to politeness, to sincerity, to a kind of deep, internal apology. He thanked her, bowing a little at his desk. "Your work has interested me," he said.

"It is not my work, sir. It's Margaret's. We just discussed together some of the ideas."

"Such as?"

"Well, the necessity of a collective language, a mutual tongue."

"And why is that necessary?" Stasselova leaned back and folded his hands across his vast torso.

"To maintain order," she said. And then the sun fell completely, blowing one last blast of light across the Americas before it settled into the Soviet Union, and some of that light, a glittery, barely perceptible dust, settled around Solveig's head. She looked like a dominatrix, an intellectual dominatrix, delivering this brutal news.

"And your history in psycholinguistics?" he said.

"I have only my personal history," she said. "The things that have happened to me." I would not have been surprised if at that declaration the whole university had imploded, turned to liquid, and flowed away. "Besides," she said, "all the research and work was Margaret's. I saw her working on it, night after night."

"Then, Margaret," he turned his gaze on me, "I see you are intimately connected with evolutionary history as well as Soviet ideology. As well, it appears, you've been steeped in a lifetime's study of linguistic psychosocial theory."

"Is it because she's female," Solveig asked, "that she's made to account for every scrap of knowledge?"

"Look," he said after a long, cruel silence, "I simply want to know from what cesspool these ideas arose. If you got them from a book, I will be relieved, but if these ideas are still floating around in your bloodlines, in your wretched little towns, I want to know."

I was about to cave in. Better a plagiarist than a fascist from a tainted bloodline.

"I don't really think you should be talking about our bloodlines," Solveig said. "It's probably not appropriate." She enunciated the word "appropriate" in such a way that Stasselova flinched, just slightly. Both he and I stared at her. She really was extraordinarily thin. In a certain light she could look shockingly beautiful, but in another, such as the dim one in Stasselova's office, she could look rather threatening. Her contact lenses were the color of a night sky split by lightning. Her genetic information was almost entirely hidden—the color of her hair and eyes and skin, the shape of her body—and this gave her a psychological advantage of sorts.

STASSELOVA'S lecture on Thursday afternoon was another strange little affair, given as long autumn rays of sun, embroidered by leaves, covered his face and body. He was onto his main obsession again, the verb—specifically, the work of the verb in the sentence, and how it relates to the work of a man in the world.

"The revolution takes place from a position of stability, always. The true revolutionary will find his place within the status quo."

"And this is why you joined the Russian army in attacking your own country?" This was Hans, startling us all.

"I did not attack my own country," Stasselova said. "Never."

"But you watched as the Nazis attacked it in August of 1944, yes? And used that attack for your own purposes?"

"This night I was there, it's true," he said, "on the banks of

the Vistula, and I saw Warsaw burn. And I was wearing the fur hat of Russia, yes. But when I attempted to cross the Vistula, in order to help those of my countrymen who were escaping, I was brought down—clubbed with a rifle to the back of the head by my commanding officer, a Russian."

"That's interesting, because in accounts of the time you are referred to as an officer yourself—Officer Stasselova, of course."

"Yes. I was a Polish officer though. Certainly you can infer the hierarchy involved?"

"What I can infer . . ." Hans's voice rose, and then Stasselova's joined in, contrapuntally, "What you can infer . . .," and for a moment the exchange reminded me of those rounds we sang at summer camp. "What you can infer," Stasselova said, drowning out Hans, "is that this was an ambiguous time for those of us who were Polish. You can't judge after the fact. Perhaps you think that I should be dead on those banks, making the willows to grow." Stasselova's eyes were shot with the dying light; he squinted at us and looked out the window momentarily. "You will stand there and think maybe certain men in certain times should not choose their own lives, should not want to live." And then he turned away from Hans. I myself scowled at Hans. So rude!

"And so I did live," Stasselova said finally. "Mostly because I was wearing my Russian hat, made of the fur of ten foxes. It was always Russia that dealt us blows, and it was always Russia that saved us. You see?"

THE next day I was with Hans in the woods. We were on our stomachs in a clearing, looking to the east, from where the rain was stalking us through the trees.

"What I want to know," Hans was saying, "is why is he always asking for you to see him?"

"Oh," I said, "he thinks I plagiarized that first paper."

"Did you?"

"Not really."

"Why does he think so?"

"Says it smacks of Soviet propaganda."

"Really? Well, he should know."

"I agree with him—that you're judging him from an irrelevant stance."

"He was found guilty of treason by his own people, not me—by the Committee for Political Responsibility. Why else would he be here, teaching at some Lutheran college in Minnesota? This is a guy who brought martial law down on his own people, and now we sit here in the afternoon and watch him march around in front of us, relating everything he speaks of—*comma splices*, for Christ's sake—to his own innocence."

"Yet all sorts of people were found guilty of all sorts of meaningless things by that committee."

"I bet he thinks you're a real dream—this woman willing to absolve the old exterminator of his sins."

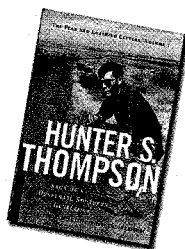
"That's insulting," I said. But I realized how fond I'd grown

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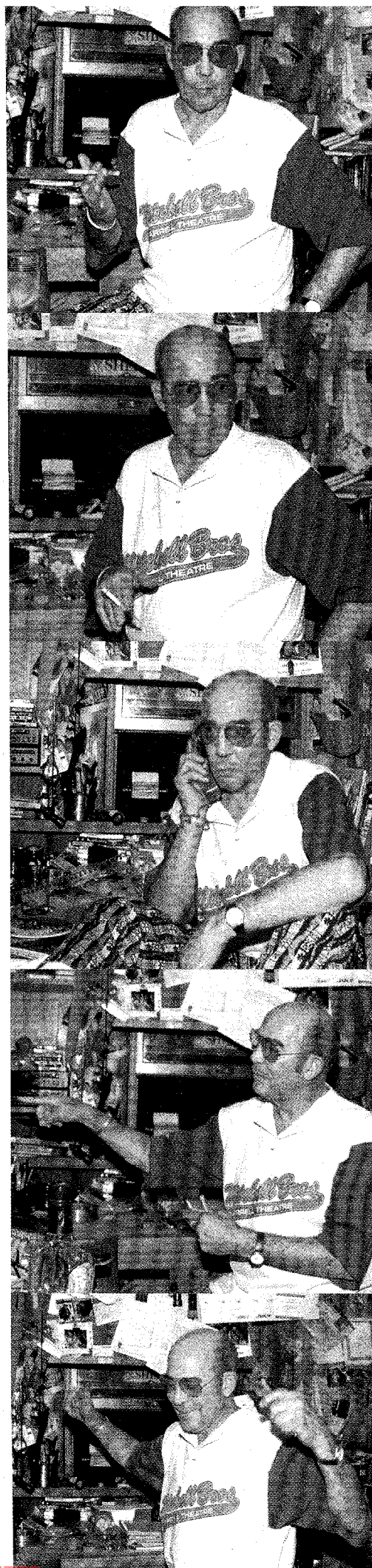


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of this professor in his little office, drinking his bitter coffee, night descending into the musky heart of Humanities.

And then the rain was upon us. We could hear it on the tiny ledges of leaves above us more than feel it. "Let's go," Hans said, grabbing my hand with his left, damaged hand. The way his hand held mine was alluring; his hand had the nimbus of an idea about it, as if the gene that had sprung this hand had a different world in mind, a better world, where hands had more torque when they grasped each other, and people held things differently, like hooks—a world where all objects were shaped something like lanterns, and were passed on and on.

MONDAY was gray, with long silver streaks of rain. I dragged myself out of the warmth of my bed and put on my rain slicker. At nine forty-five I headed toward Stasselova's office.

"Hello," I said, knocking on the open door. "I'm sorry to disturb you outside your office hours." I was shivering; I felt pathetic.

"Margaret," he said. "Hello. Come in." As I sat down, he said, "You've brought with you the smell of rain."

He poured me coffee in a Styrofoam cup. During our last class I had been so moved by his description of that night on the Vistula that I'd decided to confess. But now I was hesitating. "Could I have some of this cream?" I asked, pointing to a little tin cup of it on his windowsill.

"There it is again," he said, as he reached for the cream.

"There is what again?"

"That little verbal tic of yours."

"I didn't know I had one," I said.

"I noticed it first in class," he said. "You say 'this' instead of 'that'; 'this cream,' not 'that cream.' The line people draw between the things they consider *this* and the things they consider *that* is the perimeter of their sphere of intimacy. You see? Everything inside is *this*; everything inside is close,

is intimate. Since you pointed at the cream and it is farther from you than I am, 'this' suggests that I am among the things you consider close to you. I'm flattered," he said, and handed me the creamer, which was, like him, sweating. What an idea—that with a few words you could catch another person in a little grammatical clutch, arrange the objects of the world such that they bordered the two of you.

"At any rate," he said, "I'm glad you showed up."

"You are?"

"Yes. I've wanted to ask you something."

"Yes?"

"This spring the college will hold its annual symposium on language and politics. I thought you might present your paper. Usually one of the upperclassmen does this, but I thought your paper might be more appropriate."

"I thought you hated my paper."

"I do."

"Oh."

"So you'll do it?"

"I'll think about it," I said.

He nodded and smiled, as if the matter were settled. The rain was suddenly coming down very hard. It was loud, and we were silent for a few moments, listening. I stared beyond his head out the window, which was blurry with water, so that the turrets of the campus looked like a hallucination, like some shadow world looming back there in his unconscious.

"This rain," he said then, in a quiet, astonished voice, and his word *this* entered me as it was meant to—quietly, with a sharp tip, but then, like an arrowhead, widening and widening, until it included the whole landscape around us.

THE rain turned to snow, and winter settled on our campus. The face of nature turned away—beautiful and distracted. After Christmas at home (where I received my report card, a tiny slip of paper that seemed to have flown across the snows to deliver me my A in Stasselova's class) I hunkered down in my dorm for the month of January, and barely emerged. The dorm in which most of us freshman girls lived was the elaborate, dark Agnes Mellby Hall, named after the stern, formidable virgin whose picture hung over the fireplace in our lounge.



As winter crept over us, we retired to Mellby earlier and earlier. Every night that winter, in which most of us were nineteen, was a slumber party in the main sitting room among its ornate furnishings, all of which had the paws of beasts where they touched the floor. There, nightly, we ate heavily, like Romans, but childish foods, popcorn and pizza and ice cream, most of us spiraling downstairs now and then to throw up in the one private bathroom.

On one of those nights I was reading a book in the sitting room when I received a phone call from Solveig, who was down at a house party in town and wanted me to come help her home. She wasn't completely drunk, but calculated that she would be in about forty-five minutes. Her body was like a tract of nature that she understood perfectly—a constellation whose movement across the night sky she could predict, or a gathering storm, or maybe, more accurately, a sparkling stream of elements into which she introduced alcohol with such careful calibration that her blood flowed exactly as she desired, uphill and down, intersecting precisely, chemically, with time and fertility. Solveig did not stay at the dorm with us much, but rather ran with an older pack of girls, feminists mostly, who that winter happened to be involved in a series of protests, romantic insurrections, against the president of the college, who was clearly terrified of them.

About ten minutes before I was to leave, Stasselova appeared in the doorway of the sitting room. I had not seen him in more than a month, since the last day of class, but he had called a few times. I had not returned his calls, in the hopes that he would forget about my participation in the symposium. But here he was, wearing a long gray coat over his bulkiness. His head looked huge, the bones widely spaced, like the architecture of a grand civic building.

The look in his eyes caused me to gaze out across the room and try to see what he was seeing: perhaps some debauched canvas of absolute female repose, girls lying everywhere in various modes of pajamas and sweats, surrounded by vast quantities of food and books. Some girls—and even I found this a bit creepy—had stuffed animals that they carried with them to the sitting room at night. I happened to be poised above the fray, straddling a piano bench, with a book spread in front of me, but almost all the rest were lying on their backs with their extremities cast about, feet propped on the couch or stretched up in the air at weird, hyperextended angles. We were Lutherans, after all, and unlike the more experienced, secular girls across the river, at the state college, we were losing our innocence right here, among ourselves. It was being taken from us physically, and we were just relaxing until it fell away completely.

Stasselova, in spite of all he'd seen in his life, which I'd gleaned from what he said in class (the corpulent Goering marching through the forest, marking off Nazi territory, and

later Stalin's horses breaking through the same woods, heralding the swath that would now be Soviet), still managed to look a little scared as he peered into our sitting room, eventually lifting a hand to wave at me.

I got up and approached him. "Hey," I said.

"Hello. How are you, Margaret?"

"It's good to see you. Thanks for the A."

"You deserved it. Listen, I have something for you," he said, mildly gesturing for us to leave the doorway, because everybody was looking at us.

"Great," I said. "But you know, right now I need to walk downtown to pick up Solveig at a house party."

"Fine," he said. "I'll walk you."

"Oh. Okay."

I got my jacket, and the two of us stepped into the night. The snow had arranged itself in curling waves on the Mellby lawn, and stuck in it were hundreds of silver forks, which, in a flood of early-evening testosterone, the freshman boys had placed in the earth, a gesture appropriate to their sexual frustration and also to their faith in the future. Stasselova and I stepped between them. They looked spooky and lovely, like tiny silver grave sites in the snow. As we walked across campus, Stasselova produced a golden brochure from his pocket and handed it to me. On the front it said, in emerald-green letters, "9th Annual Symposium on Language and Politics." Inside, under "Keynote Student Speaker," was my name. "Margaret Olafson, 'The Common Harvest.'" I stopped walking. We paused at the top of the stairs that floated down off the campus and into the town. I felt extremely, inordinately proud. Some winter lightning, a couple of great wings of it, flashed in the north. Stasselova looked paternal, grand.

THE air at the party was beery and wildish, and the house itself—its many random rooms and slanting floors—seemed the product of a drunken adolescent mind. At first we could not spot Solveig, so Stasselova and I waited quietly in the hallway until a guy in a baseball cap came lurching toward us, shouting in a friendly way over the music that we could buy plastic glasses for the keg for two dollars apiece. Stasselova paid him and then threaded through the crowd, gracefully for such a large man, to stand in the keg line. I watched him as he patiently stood there, the snowflakes melting on his dark shoulders.

And then Hans was on my arm. "What on earth?" he said. "Why are you here? I thought you hated these parties." He'd been dancing, apparently. He was soaked in sweat, his hair curling up at his neck.

I pointed to Stasselova.

"No kidding," Hans said.

"He showed up at my dorm as I was leaving to get Solveig."

"He came to Mellby?"

"Yes."

"God, look at him. I bet they had a nickname for him, like the Circus Man or something. All those old fascists had cheery nicknames."

Stasselova was now walking toward us. Behind him the picture window revealed a nearly black sky, with pretty crystalline stars around. He looked like a dream one might have in childhood. "He is not a fascist," I said quietly.

"Professor!" Hans raised his glass.

"Hans, yes, how are you? This is a wonderful party," Stasselova said, and it actually was. Sometimes these parties could seem deeply cozy, their wildness and noise an affirmation against the formless white midwestern winter surrounding us.

He handed me a beer. "So," he said rather formally, lifting his glass. "To youth."

"To experience," Hans said, smiling, and lifted his glass.

"To the party." Stasselova looked pleased, his eyes shining from the soft lamplight.

"The Party?" Hans raised an eyebrow.

"This party," Stasselova said forcefully, cheerfully.

"And to the committee," Hans said.

"The committee?"

"The Committee for Political Responsibility."

In one of Stasselova's lectures he had taken great pains to explain to us that language did not describe events, it handled them, as a hand handles an object, and that in this way language made the world happen under its supervision. I could see that Hans had taken this to heart and was making lurching attempts in this direction.

Mercifully, Solveig appeared. Her drunkenness and her dignity had synergized into something quite spectacular, an inner recklessness accompanied by great external restraint. Her hair looked the color of heat—bright white. She was wearing newly cut-off jeans and was absently holding the disassociated pant legs in her hand.

"The professor," she said, when she saw Stasselova. "The professor of oppression."

"Hello, Solveig."

"So you came," she said, as if this had been the plan all along.

"Yes. It's nice to see you again."

"You as well," she said. "Why are you here?"

The whole scene looked deeply romantic to me. "To take you home," he said.

"Home?" she said, as if this were the most elegant and promising word in the language. "Yours or mine?"

"Yours, of course. Yours and Margaret's."

"Where is your home again?" she asked. Her eyes were glimmering with complexity, like something that is given to human beings after evolution, as a gift.

"I live downtown," he said.

"No, your real home. Your homeland."

He paused. "I am from Poland," he said finally.

"Then there. Let's go there. I have always wanted to go to Poland."

Stasselova smiled. "Perhaps you would like it there."

"I have always wanted to see Wenceslaus Square."

"Well, that is nearby."

"Excellent. Let us go." And Solveig swung open the front door and walked into the snow in her shorts and T-shirt. I kissed Hans good-bye, and Stasselova and I followed her.

Once outside, Stasselova took off his coat and hung it around Solveig. Underneath his coat he was wearing a dark jacket and a tie. It looked sweet, and made me think that if one kept undressing him, darker and darker suits would be found underneath.

Solveig was walking before us on the narrow sidewalk. Above her, on the hill, hovered Humanities—great, intelligent, alight. She reached into the coat pocket and pulled out, to my astonishment, a fur hat. The hat! The wind lifted, and the trees shook off a little of their silver snow. Humanities leaned over us, interested in its loving but secular way. I felt as sure about everything as those archaeologists who discover a single bone and can then hypothesize the entire animal. Solveig placed the hat on her head and turned to vamp for a moment, opening and closing the coat and raising her arms above her head in an exaggerated gesture of beauty. She looked like some stirring, turning simulacrum of communist and capitalist ideas. As she was doing this, we passed by the president's house. It was an old-fashioned house, with high turrets, and had a bizarre modern wing hanging off one end of it. Solveig studied it for a moment as she walked, and then suddenly shouted into the cold night, "Motherfucker!"

Stasselova looked as if he'd been clubbed again in the back of the head, but he kept walking. He pretended that nothing had happened, didn't even turn his head to look at the house, but when I turned to him, I saw his eyes widen and his face stiffen with shock. I said "Oh" quietly, and grabbed his hand for a moment to comfort him, to let him know that everything was under control, that this was Minnesota. Look—the president's house is still as dark as death, the moon is still high, the snow sparkling everywhere.

His hand was extraordinarily big. After Hans's hand, which I'd held for the past few months, Stasselova's more ordinary hand felt strange, almost mutant, its five fingers splayed and independent.

THE next night, in the cafeteria, over a grisly neon dish called Festival Rice, I told Hans about the hat. "I saw the hat," I said.

A freshman across the cafeteria stood just then and shouted, in what was a St. Gustav tradition, "*I want a standing ovation!*" The entire room stood and erupted into wild applause and hooting. Hans and I stood as well, and as we clapped, I leaned over to yell, "He's been telling the truth about that

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night overlooking Warsaw: I saw the hat he was wearing.”

“What does that mean? That means nothing. I have a fur hat.”

“No,” I said. “It was this big Russian hat. You should have seen it. This big, beautiful Russian hat. Solveig put it on. It saved his life.”

Hans didn’t even try to object; he just kind of gasped, as if the great gears of logic in his brain could not pass this syllogism through. We were still standing, clapping, applauding. I couldn’t help thinking of something Stasselova had said in class: that at rallies for Stalin, when he spoke to crowds over loudspeakers, one could be shot for being the first to stop clapping.

I AVOIDED my paper for the next month or so, until spring crashed in huge warm waves and I finally sought it out, sunk in its darkened drawer. It was a horrible surprise. I was not any more of a scholar, of course, than I had been six months earlier, when I’d plagiarized it, but my eyes had now passed over Marx and a biography of Stalin (microphones lodged in eyeglasses, streams of censors on their way to work, bloody corpses radiating out of Moscow) and the gentle Bonhoeffer. Almost miraculously I had crossed that invisible line beyond which people turn into actual readers, when they start to hear the voice of the writer as clearly as in a conversation. “Language,” Tretsky had written, “is essentially a coercive act, and in the case of Eastern Europe it must be used as a tool to garden collective hopes and aspirations.”

As I read, with Solveig napping at the other end of the couch, I felt a thick dread forming. Tretsky, with his suggestions of annexations and, worse, of *solutions*, seemed to be reaching right off the page, his long, thin hand grasping me by the shirt. And I could almost hear the wild mazurka, as Stasselova had described it, fading, the cabarets closing down, the music turning into a chant, the bootheels falling, the language fortifying itself, becoming a stronghold—a fixed, unchanging system, as the paper said, a moral framework.

ALMOST immediately I was on my way to Stasselova’s office, but not before my mother called. The golden brochures had gone out in the mail. “Sweetie!” she said. “What’s this? Keynote speaker? Your father and I are beside ourselves. Good night!” She always exclaimed “Good night!” at times of great happiness. I could not dissuade her from coming, and as I fled the dorm, into the rare, hybrid air of early April, I was wishing for those bad, indifferent parents who had no real interest in their children’s lives.

The earth under my feet as I went to him was very sticky, almost lugubrious, like the earth one sometimes encounters in dreams. Stasselova was there, as always. He seemed pleased to see me.

I sat down and said, “You know, I was thinking that may-

be somebody else could take my place at the symposium. As I reread my paper, I realized it isn’t really what I meant to say at all.”

“Oh,” he said. “Of course you can deliver it. I would not abandon you at a moment like this.”

“Really, I wouldn’t take it as abandonment.”

“I would not leave you in the lurch,” he said. “I promise.”

I felt myself being carried, mysteriously, into the doomed symposium, despite my resolve on the way over to back out at all costs. How could I win an argument against somebody with an early training in propaganda? I had to resort finally to the truth, that rinky-dink little boat in the great sea of persuasion. “See, I didn’t really write the paper myself.”

“Well, every thinker builds an idea on the backs of those before him—or her, in your case.” He smiled at this. His teeth were very square, and humble, with small gaps between them. I could see that Stasselova was no longer after a confession. I was more valuable if I contained these ideas. Probably he’d been subconsciously looking for me ever since he’d lain on the muddy banks of the Vistula, Warsaw flaming across the waters. He could see within me all his failed ideals, the ugliness of his former beliefs contained in a benign vessel—a girl!—high on a religious hill in the Midwest. He had found somebody he might oppose, and in this way absolve himself. He smiled. I could feel myself as indispensable in the organization of his psyche. Behind his head, in the sunset, the sun wasn’t falling, only receding farther and farther.

THE days before the symposium unfurled like the days before a wedding one dreads, both endless and accelerated, the sky filling with springtime events—ravishing sun, great winds, and eccentric green storms that focused everyone’s attention skyward. And then the weekend of the symposium was upon us, the Saturday of my speech rising in the east. I awoke early and went to practice my paper on the red steps of Humanities, in whose auditorium my talk was to take place. Solveig was still sleeping, hung over from the night before. I’d been with her for the first part of it, had watched her pursue a man she’d discovered—a graduate student, actually, in town for the symposium. I had thought him a bit of a bore, but I trusted Solveig’s judgment. She approached men with stealth and insight, her vision driving into those truer, more isolated stretches of personality.

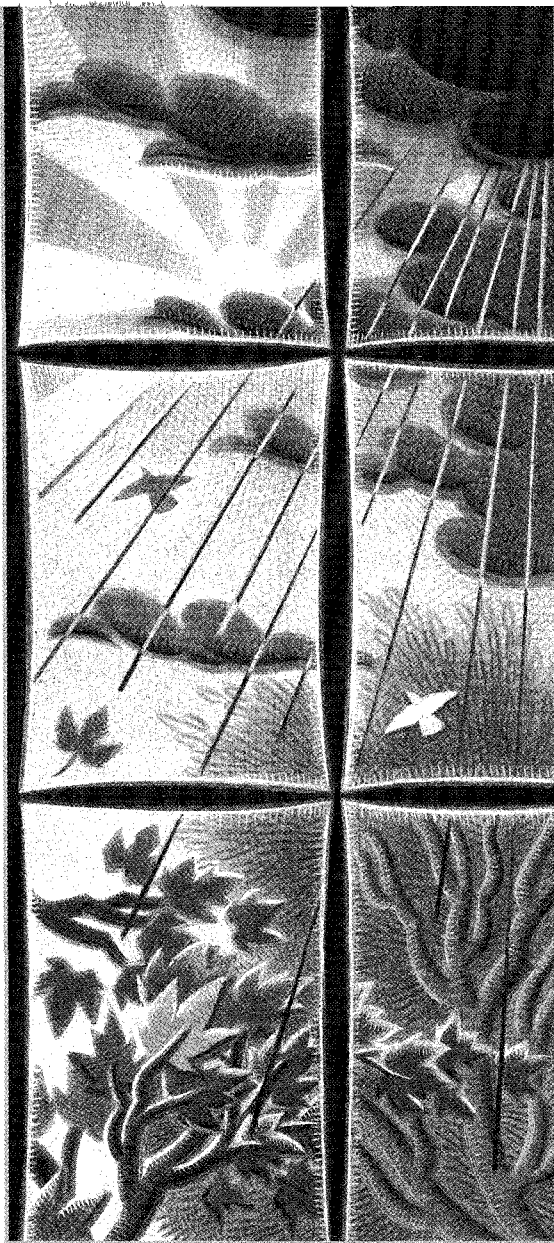
I had practiced the paper countless times, and revised it, attempting to excise the most offensive lines without gutting the paper entirely and thus disappointing Stasselova. That morning I was still debating over the line “If we could agree on a common language, a single human tongue, perhaps then a single flag might unfurl over the excellent earth, one nation of like and companion souls.” Reading it now, I had a faint memory of my earlier enthusiasm for this paper, its surface promise, its murderous innocence. Remembering this, I

looked out over the excellent earth, at the town below the hill. And there, as always, was a tiny Gothic graveyard looking peaceful, everything still and settled finally under the gnarled, knotty, nearly human arms of apple trees. There were no apples yet, of course: they were making their way down the bough, still liquid, or whatever they are before birth. At the sight of graves I couldn't help thinking of Tretsky, my ghost-writer, in his dark suit under the earth, delightedly preparing, thanks to me, for his one last gasp.

By noon the auditorium had filled with a crowd of about two hundred, mostly graduate students and professors from around the Midwest, along with Hans and Solveig, who sat together, and, two rows behind them, my long-suffering parents, flushed with pride. I sat alone on a slight stage at the front of the room, staring out at the auditorium, which was named Luther. It had wooden walls and was extremely tall; it seemed humble and a little awkward, in that way the tall can seem. The windows stretched its full height, so that one could see the swell of earth on which Humanities was built, and then, above, all manner of weather, which this afternoon was running to rain. In front of these windows stood the reformed genius of martial law himself, the master of ceremonies, Stasselova. Behind him were maple trees, with small green leaves waving. He had always insisted in class that language as it rises in the mind looks like a tree branching, from finity to infinity. Let every voice cry out! He had once said this, kind of absently, and water had come to his eyes—not exactly tears, just a rising of the body's water into the line of sight.

After he introduced me, I stood in front of the crowd, my larynx rising quite against my will, and delivered my paper. I tried to speak each word as a discrete item, in order to persuade the audience not to synthesize the sentences into meaning. But when I lifted my head to look out at my listeners, I could see they were doing just that. When I got to the part where I said the individual did not exist—citizens were “merely shafts of light lost, redemptively, in the greater light of the state”—I saw Hans bow his head and rake his otherworldly hand through his hair.

“... And if force is required to forge a singular and mutual grammar, then it is our sacred duty to hasten the birthpangs.”



Even from this distance I could hear Stasselova's breathing, and the sound of blood running through him like a quiet but rushing stream.

And then my parents. As the speech wore on —“harmony,” “force,” “flowering,” “blood”— I could see that the very elegant parental machinery they had designed over the years, which sought always to translate my deeds into something lovely, light-bearing, full of promise, was spinning a little on its wheels. Only Solveig, that apparatchik of friendship, maintained her confidence in me. Even when she was hung over, her posture suggested a perfect alignment between heaven and earth. She kept nodding, encouraging me.

I waited the entire speech for Stasselova to leap forward and confront me, to reassert his innocence in opposition

to me, but he did not, even when I reached the end. He stood and watched as everybody clapped in bewilderment, and a flushed floral insignia rose on his cheeks. I had come to love his wide, excited face, the old circus man. He smiled at me. He was my teacher, and he had wrapped himself, his elaborate historical self, into this package, and stood in front of the high windows, to teach me my little lesson, which turned out to be not about Poland or fascism or war, borderlines or passion or loyalty, but just about the sentence: the importance of, the sweetness of. And I did long for it, to say one true sentence of my own, to leap into the subject, that sturdy vessel traveling upstream through the axonal predicate into what is possible; into the object, which is all possibility; into what little we know of the future, of eternity—the light of which, incidentally, was streaming in on us just then through the high windows. Above Stasselova's head the storm clouds were dispersing, as if frightened by some impending good will, and I could see that the birds were out again, forming into that familiar pointy hieroglyph, as they're told to do from deep within. ☎

NOTES ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by HANS KONING

*It was the bloodiest ever, but still
some surprising good has
come out of it*

THE fate of the twentieth century was largely forged in the West. It may be the last century for which this will hold true. Inventions have changed our ways of doing most things, but the greatest changes have taken place in our way of looking at ourselves and at life. I want to focus on that, on the human condition, and on the Western world.

I have lived through most of this century and I have traveled to the four corners of the globe. I do not think I am stuck in a white U.S.-European viewpoint: I know how it feels to be an underdog. I have been in various jails as a political protester, and during those five medieval years when the Germans occupied the country of my youth, Holland, and most of Europe, I was a fugitive and a "terrorist."

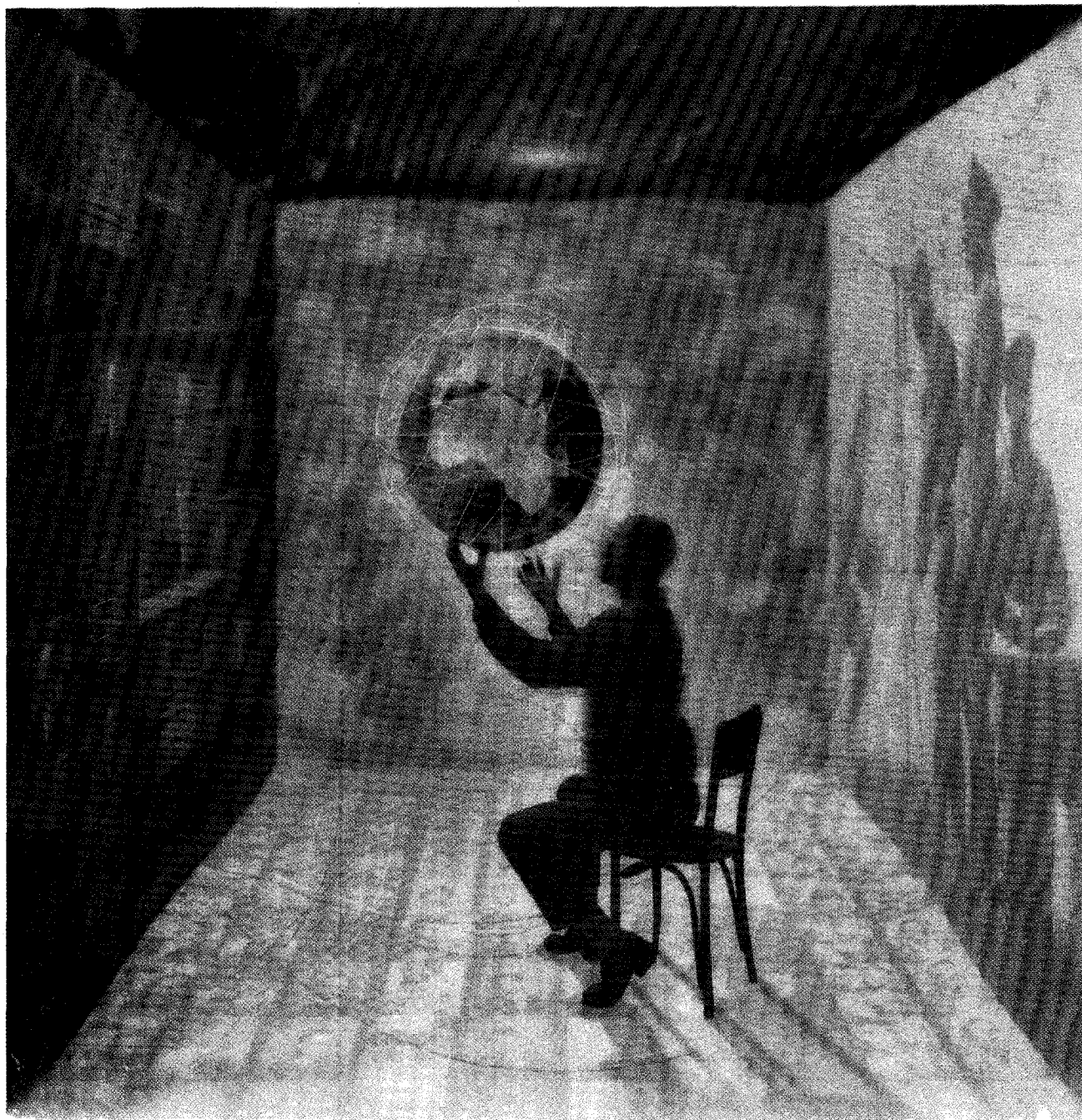
In the Western world the century began with great expectations. The early years became known as La Belle Epoque, and if one focused on New York's Park Avenue and London's Mayfair and the 8th and 16th arrondissements of Paris, one found indeed a unique concentration of chic women and dashing men in private mansions and Delahaye convertibles, all in an atmosphere of total self-assurance. None of them doubted that they represented a progress that was to continue from strength to strength. The white race took it for granted then that it was meant to rule the earth; the rest of the world, Kipling's lesser breeds, largely took the whites at their own evaluation and timetable. In E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* the Indian doctor Aziz tells his English friend, "If it's fifty-five hundred years we shall get rid of you." Twenty-five years after those words were written, the British Raj was gone.

It was a time in the West when violent death had become rare. Train wrecks and conflagrations and the sinking of the

Titanic stood out shockingly and became engraved in national memories. It was a time filled with whispering about sex and about syphilis, which was the AIDS of those days but which few newspapers cared to mention. Eugenics was one of the century's prescriptions for progress: it worked well for horses and dogs, and professor Cesare Lambroso, of Turin, could already tell from a child's ears and skull whether he would turn out a criminal. A lessening of nationalism would end the wild military spending. "The coming nationality will be essentially a matter of education and economics," the famous eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* announced in 1910.

Neither the earth nor even the sun was in the center of the universe anymore, but as Queen Victoria's chaplain, Charles Kingsley, had earlier written, "The railroad, Cunard's liners, and the electric telegraph are . . . signs that we are, on some points at least, in harmony with the universe; that there is a mighty spirit working among us . . . the ordering and creating God." Men and women, more than ever before or since, felt at home on earth and in control of their destiny. The natural demons of the past had been banished by reason and electricity, and the human demons of the new century were still hidden.

We do not need to be jealous of all this certainty. It masked another world, of exploitation, racism, colonialism, class arrogance. Coolies had to tap rubber for fifty centimes a day, miners had to breathe coal dust and gases until their lungs were used up, chimney sweeps died before they were eighteen, housemaids were fitting subjects for seduction jokes—all this injury and insult to maintain the civilized society that knew how to appreciate an entrechat royal, a new tenor, a new school of painting. And thus many people became enemies of



the world they lived in. They, too, believed in the historical certainty of progress, but they felt it would enter on its proper path only after a great revolutionary turnabout.

In *Le Destin du siècle* (1931) the French historian Jean-Richard Bloch called Napoleon “the first modern man.” The modern age, he said, was defined by its unlimitedness, its concept of power without religious or moral counterweight. Napoleon was its isolated first modern practitioner, and Nietzsche (who died in 1900) was its first prophet: the idea was in the air by then, but he put it into words. Presently—to be precise, in 1914—the Western world would start sailing under that flag. Fate, destiny, tragedy, all became “politics,” thus destroying a belief in the sense of history, in justice ultimately governing human affairs.

DER FRISCHFRÖHLICHE KRIEG

THE last white war: in 1895 Winston Churchill traveled to Cuba, where the Spanish were fighting the Cuban insurgents. He wrote that he just had to witness this, because it would be the last war ever in which whites fought whites. (The mistake of seeing contemporary events loom so large is a great stumbling block for futurists.) Churchill needn’t have fretted himself. He got the greatest white-on-white war ever at his doorstep on the sunny Saturday of August 1, 1914, when the German infantry crossed the border of Luxembourg. That day we entered the modern age, and war became its expression.

By 1914 the concept of warfare, in Europe as in the United States, was quite positive, perhaps more positive than it had been since the heyday of the Roman Empire. Jules Verne, the futurist writer, predicting a warless century ahead, had a twenty-

tieth-century man say, "Our bellicose notions are fading away, and with them our honorable ideas." Lack of fear and a peculiar idea of manly honor had become political qualifications, meant to prove that the ruling classes and the white race itself were willing to pay the price for their right to run the world. A handful of officers commanding native troops could keep vast colonial possessions in bondage because they were, supposedly, always ready to

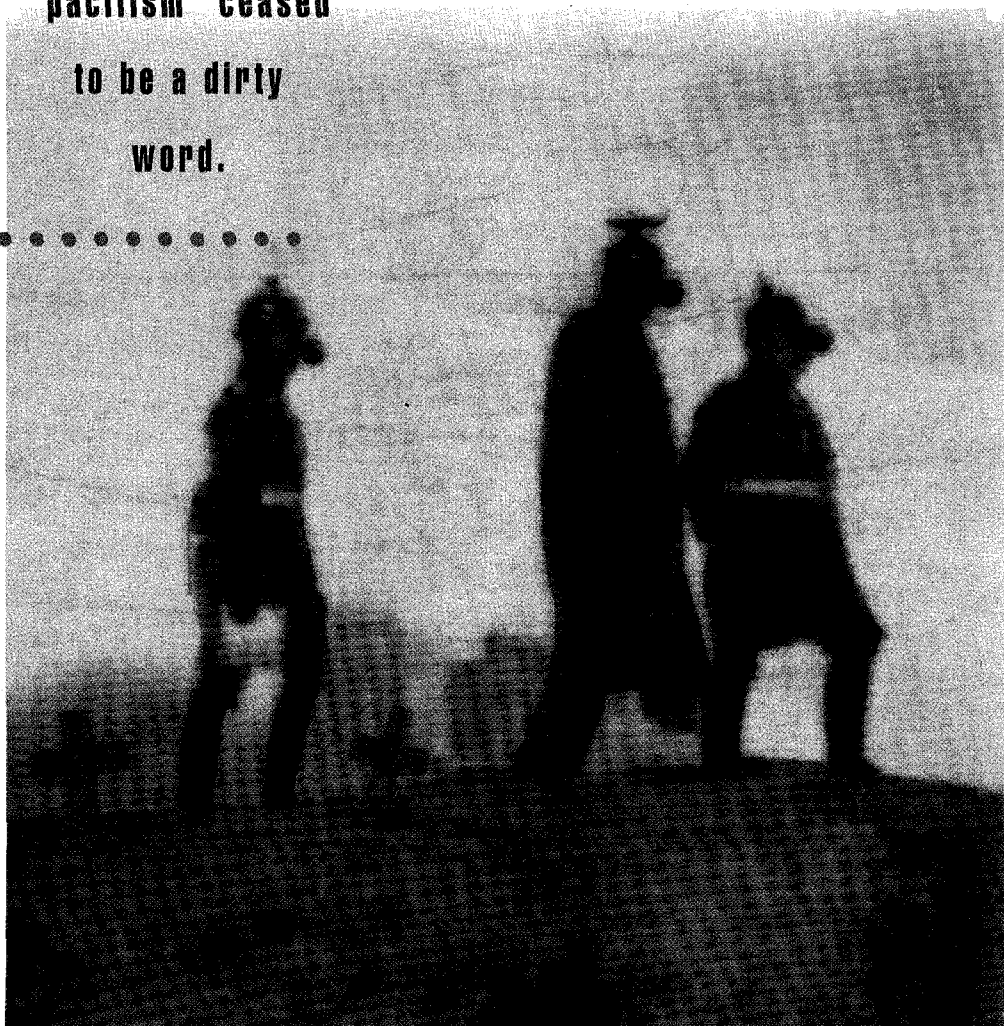
die, whereas the native populations weren't even ready to kill. In that 1910 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* a British officer wrote in the article "Egypt" that the Egyptian peasant would make an admirable soldier "if he only wished to kill someone." Professional soldiers held civilians in contempt, and to them the nonwhite races were civilians twice over. It never dawned on them that it isn't race but *cause* that makes people soldierly or not.

As for the United States, which had been a haven for thousands of draft dodgers from Europe, it had no military caste but its ideas of true manliness were not very different, and a successful general always had and still has a shortcut to the presidency.

Because of the positive concept of war, the generals running the show in 1914 were not appalled by the massacres caused by their tactics. On the contrary, when the planned and often already announced breakthroughs did not materialize, the massacres became the *reason* for their tactics. This was called attrition of the enemy. Newspapers, everywhere interfered with by governments, played along and continued describing trench warfare in the words of a cricket match. Life within the warring countries returned to near normalcy; it was just that there was a line between them along which young

men were told to kill one another with every conceivable means, stopping at nothing. Twenty thousand British and Canadian soldiers were routinely killed on single mornings just by being sent out of their trenches at the Somme River. At Verdun on the first day of their attack the Germans fired one million shells on the French lines. Not until the war was almost over did the hopelessness, the criminal uselessness, of all this penetrate the populations at large. Then, finally, the truth began entering the despised civilians' minds that so many had been killed and gassed and maimed only through the self-satisfied obtuseness of their officers, and "pacifism" ceased to be a dirty word.

**As the truth
became plain,
that so many had
been killed
and maimed only
because of the
obtuseness of
their officers,
"pacifism" ceased
to be a dirty
word.**



The bitter irony was that when the second installment of the thirty-year white civil war began to loom, this changed climate of opinion blinded most politicians to the threat. Neville Chamberlain was not stupid; he was simply one of the many who literally refused to believe that it could happen all over again.

Had there been an alternative? If we turned the clock back to the Battle of Waterloo, we might construct a more peaceful twentieth century for Europe, but with the cards distributed as they were in 1914, it's hard to see how things could have gone otherwise. The ten years of warfare separated by a twenty-year armistice have pressed their deadly stamp on this century, but we may call ourselves (all humanity, that is—including the Germans) lucky that it ended the way it did. The men ruling Germany in 1914 were determined to make their country a world power or, better, *the* world power: "*Am deutschen Wesen wird die Welt genesen*" ("German-ness will cure the world") was their slogan that year. Diplomacy or Gandhism could not have stopped them, and victory, even by the soberer German government of 1918, would have made the planet a very uncomfortable place for the rest of us. As for the German government of 1945, Western civilization would have been destroyed by its victory. Let me cite an incident that may still be less than well known. In occupied Holland some Jewish families tried to save their young children by putting them out as foundlings on church steps. In answer the Germans ruled that every abandoned infant was to be assumed Jewish and hence sent to the gas ovens.

One can but hope that the ruins of the Holocaust and of the cities and towns of 1945 have erased the concept of *der frischfröhliche Krieg*, "the fresh and jolly war," for a long time to come, although the goings-on in what was Yugoslavia may raise doubt about that—and, indeed, doubt about the redemption of the human race. I for one have at times nursed the theory that evolution, or fate, or God, wants to get rid of humanity in order to save life on the planet, and that in the absence of another species that could get the better of us, we have been programmed to take care of it ourselves.

Yet we are now sending out troops not to conquer but to restore peace, and if this piousness of politicians has to be taken with great cynicism, still there is something new here. Surely oil interests are at play, and spheres of influence, and all the rest of it, but this is the germ of an idea that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. It may have come too late. Our stopping at nothing is what made us lose our credibility as a white civilization in the van of progress. When we in the West handed out our T-shirts saying MY COUNTRY, RIGHT OR WRONG, we were taken at our word by the rest of the world. Governments have a talent for forgetting their own misdeeds and then expecting everyone else to follow suit, but peoples, and the people, have a very long memory. A black Sorbonne

graduate told me over a glass of French wine in a bar in Dakar that once Africans get the atomic bomb, their first one will be dropped on Liverpool, the slave port of their diaspora. Why doubt him? Will the newly armed nations have to go through the same bloodstained school the West did? The year 2000 will be the year 1420 in the Muslim world. In Europe's 1420 England and France were only two thirds of the way through their Hundred Years War.

RELEASED FROM TIGERS

OUR fears: in the early years of our century fear here in the West had become a private emotion. The mass fears of the past which had swept Europe at various times were relegated to the hysteria or superstitions of a dark age, together with the fear of witches, ghosts, werewolves, haunted houses, and cursed crossroads. Our self-assurance made it easy for us to feel contemptuous not only of other races but also of our own ancestors. Traditional and ritual ways of doing things, often tied to long-forgotten mythical origins, were abandoned—which left those who had not kept up with the times without a sense of control. Our fears but also our acceptance of mystery were diminished, and our concept of nature made a full turn. From dark adversary nature became first our handmaiden, ready to do our bidding, and then increasingly our victim.

That fear of nature had been a noble one. It was awe. The adventure stories of my childhood were mostly about confrontations between brave men or brave children and savage nature, with its wild animals and wild "natives." I clearly recall how often my schoolmates and I had dreams of being pursued by wolves or tigers. Whatever Freud would have made of that, it was a stimulating fear, and when we were taken to the zoo, we shivered pleasantly while watching them safe in their cages. The most admired men then were the white hunters who left our safe cities and voluntarily sought out such dangers. I remember a Marx Brothers movie in which Groucho gains the homage of everyone, including the rich lady he is wooing, with his fantasized white-hunter adventures. Wild animals were called "vermin" in those days, and in my Amsterdam grade school we had colored plates on the wall of "useful animals" and "wild animals." But in the later years of the century we saw man becoming not "a wolf to man" (as Plautus had it in Roman days) but far more brutish than any wolf or other animal ever was. I assume that most of us nowadays would rather come upon a wild animal on a lonely road than upon a strange man. We fear the stranger, "the other": We feel we don't really understand him—he has come out of the forest (literally in Italian, in which *forestiere* means "stranger"). Or we may know him only too well and he may hate us for reasons we choose to forget. Chickens come home to roost, as Stokely Carmichael said. Our children are inheriting a

world of locks and alarms, telephone booths without doors, and waiting areas without seats (the message being “Buzz off”), a world in which it may be worth their lives not to ring the doorbell of a lonely house when the car has broken down. A present-day airport departure, with its general atmosphere of grim suspicion, says it all. Compare it with the jolly shipboard farewells I remember.

None of this is trivial. That privatization on which many governments seem keen extends to the very quality of life now to be found in a private acquiring of “stuff” rather than in an enrichment of the commonality. Public space in America is left to wilt, while our homes aren’t just castles but castles with moats and the drawbridges raised. We are still social animals, though, and behind the locked doors our lonely fears burgeon.

The great private fear is death. Before 1914 death was kept out of daily life and became an unmentionable in “polite” society, just like sex. Then came the Great War, with its millions of deaths, but after victory the Allied countries tried to encapsulate and neutralize and finally exorcise them with thousands of monuments. The names of the war dead were perpetuated everywhere in bronze letters, as if that would keep them almost present. (There is a haunting scene in a French film about that time, *La Vie et rien d’autre*, in which the mayor of a village without casualties begs for some of the dead from a neighboring community for his monument.) But for the maimed veterans panhandling in the streets death remained familiar—indeed, perhaps *the* familiar. In the West maimed veterans no longer need to beg, but a new class of the disinherited and the locked-out (*les exclus*, as the French call them) has taken its place in the streets, and we will never understand the violence of its members if we do not realize just how familiar a figure death is to them.

In the locust years (Churchill’s term) between the two great wars the embittered or revolutionary veterans of the defeated nations dealt with death by making it their ally. They manned the dehumanized state machines that created their “New Order,” an order that was meant to overcome chaos but only camouflaged it. It was a chaos not found in *All Quiet on the Western Front* and other famous anti-war novels, but it is on every page of Kafka, who barely mentioned the outbreak of the 1914 war in his diary. It was the chaos of the art and music of the time, of the surrealist poetry, and of the Spanish Fascists who took as their battle cry “Long live Death!” These New Order men claimed to be unafraid of death as of life; they were *rücksichtslos* (Hitler’s favorite word)—that is, forever ready for an action that stopped at nothing.

Such was their proclaimed policy, their “Myth of the 20th Century,” which is the title of the Nazi catechism written by the party theoretician Alfred Rosenberg, who was hanged at Nuremberg in 1946. It was less a myth, though, than a pseudo-scientific harangue, a mixture of Aryan

Blood-and-Earth racism, megalomania, and Valhalla-colored death wishes. But when the Allies knocked it out of existence in May of 1945, those of its apostles who were still around decided that South America looked after all more attractive than a Wagnerian tomb.

COLD WAR NO MORE

AFTER 1945, in America as in England and France, the postwar world did not have the brittle and cynical gaiety of the post-1918 years. For one thing, there was no call for cynicism: far from being a senseless massacre, the fighting was understood to have saved us from a new dark age. And, also different from 1918, fear was not to be pushed this time into a shadowy background by flappers, the stock market, and the Charleston. On the contrary, it appeared that fear—fear of an atomic holocaust—had now become a permanence in our minds. Amazingly, people in general seemed able to put up with it and to go on with their lives as if it weren’t there. Those of us who felt that nothing took priority over stopping the threat were seen as freaks or fellow travelers of the Communists, men and women on the fringe of normal society. (At an anti-nuclear sit-in in England, I was told by an onlooker, “Well, if God means to kill us by fire, don’t you dare speak against it.”) I think that our repressed fear, destroying one more illusion of humanity (its continuity), must have done great damage to our common psyche.

It made for an unsavory spectacle in those somber years of the Cold War, the scrambling around of politicians, in America as in England and Russia and China, either showing off their macho qualities by manifesting no awe at the idea of 100 million casualties, or taking the other tack and assuring us that with a spade to dig a hole and an old door to cover it, we’d be fine. The ensuing space race made human aggressiveness leak out into the heavens. It also helped to bankrupt the Soviet Union and it put some Americans on the moon. “We”—that is, I and people I worked with (“Resist,” in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in England)—didn’t think life was enriched by the Right Stuff; we thought it meant the militarization of space and saw it as a gimmick to distract us from the Vietnam War.

Now, for the first time in many years, no atomic missiles are targeted on American cities. Nevertheless, the scenarios by our thriller writers about nuclear blackmail and rogue nuclear attacks are becoming ever more plausible, and our realizing this must be one of the ingredients of an odd malaise that is in the air in these late nineties. (No one will ever think of our *fin de siècle* as a Beautiful Epoch. Among its other ingredients I would list aggressive individualism, which is maybe really a hidden and defiant loneliness; rampant egotism made only more obnoxious by guilt feelings; an absence

hope.

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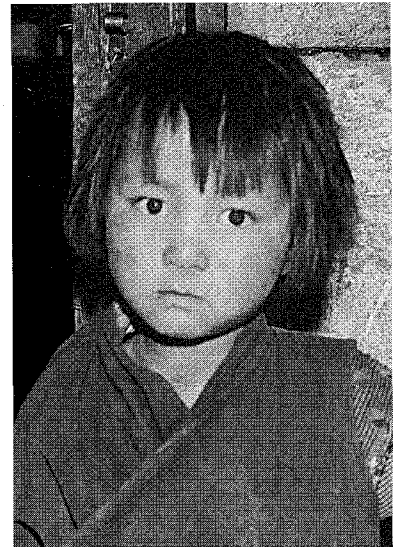
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of honor; an overabundance of bland lying.) Yet because our arrogance of a hundred years ago helped to lead to the bloodiest century in human history, one may always hope that fear and apprehension will help to make the next a better one.

Perhaps the Church was doing the right thing in trying to shut Galileo up! Humanity has not been the same since we learned that the earth is not the center of creation. Worse, we know that not God alone, or destiny, may spell our end but that we ourselves may do it. The universe has remained beyond comprehension, even if we are now able to count the number of electrons it holds, but a couple of Yalies with physics degrees, a ham politician with enough vanity to make it into the White House, and a desert oil colonel could all be heirs to the power to end human awareness of the universe.

Some have found a substitute for the loss of our unique place by accepting, against very large odds, that only our earth holds conscious life. It may be a comfort. It may also make the fragility of our future more appalling. We have come down a long and painful road since the English bishop James Usher figured out that the world was created in October of the year 4004 B.C. There is no returning to that innocence, and we have to bear it like men and women. The more ephemeral that humanity appears *sub specie aeternitatis*, the more essential it becomes to make this a just world. Right now a lot of people are more bent on making themselves feel better about the world, by looking at it through Prozac eyes, than on improving it.

THE WELFARE STATE: A HUMAN TRIUMPH

SOME deep fears were gotten rid of, though, in an important part of our world. In Western Europe (and to a lesser degree in Canada and in Australia) the fear of poverty, poverty through disease or through old age, is gone. In 1900 this was already the most prosperous part of the world (along with, of course, the United States), but poverty was far from banned. "Poverty" is a relative term; the poverty of 1900 in prosperous Western Europe is hard for a modern person to fathom. Within that poverty it made economic sense for a farm woman to spend days in the fields, bent over, picking up wheat stalks left by the reapers and coming home after twelve hours with an apronful. Families saved the equivalent of a dime a week to assure themselves decent funerals, and it made economic sense for the insurance firm to send someone around every week to pick up the dime. In my Amsterdam childhood everybody who worked for the town or the state, even as a street sweeper, was considered privileged, because he or she could look forward without fear to old age with a guaranteed pension. A streetcar conductor made a very eligible bachelor.

In these countries, after the trauma of war and occupation,

time stood still for one beat in 1945. There was room to think and a need to think things over. Governments *owed* their people, having let them down and failed to protect them, and having demanded and gotten appalling sacrifices from them in order to make up for the governments' shortcomings. This had already happened once, in 1918, when they reneged on their promises. They could have again but did not in 1945. In that climate a body of law was created to abolish poverty and its discriminations. A completely original framework for human interaction was built, and its influence on daily life was huge. It was at that point that the social environment of the United States clearly diverged from that of Western Europe. An American in Amsterdam or Oslo may remain unaware of it, since there is no ideology attached that would visibly change public activities.

The change was not about equalizing incomes. It was in the first place about sharing, about building public space—hospitals, schools, universities, parks, sports centers, libraries, and all the rest—that is freely shared by people with incomes high and low. The idea was to create an environment "without poor"—a welfare state. This was indeed achieved, if only up to a point, because the vast immigration from the Third World created a new proletariat and a new division. We in the United States are now regularly informed that the Europeans have realized they cannot afford their welfare states and are busy dismantling them. This is not true. I have followed the lives of friends and relatives in Holland and France through times of personal crisis, and I feel certain that an abandonment of the system is inconceivable. Yes, it is being trimmed everywhere, as it must be to survive in the present economic jungle. But the basic principle is not threatened—not even in Britain, where it survived eighteen years of Tory government.

Contrary to what Europeans may think, the poor in the United States are not abandoned to their fate; when all is said and done, almost everyone gets fed here, and everyone gets some kind of medical-emergency assistance. But it's done in a nineteenth-century-charity sort of way, rather than by giving everyone access to the same amenities—amenities paid for by taxes, of course, but otherwise free to the user. I must add that the Department of Motor Vehicles atmosphere of shabbiness that supposedly hangs over the European welfare state is an American political myth. Precisely because the system has no means-test approach, governmental waiting rooms and offices are filled not with the usual suspects but with average citizens. The wait for a free Dutch doctor is not longer than the wait for a hundred-dollar doctor in New York.

These aren't small matters. Welfare systems have made people notably less aggressive (from another point of view, less businesslike and enterprising). Everyone who lives under an assured roof, with assured meals, education, and medical care, starts to act differently all along the line. The

Swedish suicide rate, which is regularly quoted to me as proof that people do not want all that security, has at times been close to the U.S. rate—which in this decade has floated around twelve per 100,000 (and Sweden is one dark country).

I realize that the European systems wouldn't work well here. We do not have the homogenous substructure, with a population counted and accounted for in great detail. We don't have the solidarity that Europe acquired only after the devastations of this century. We have had plenty of wars, but they were far away, and we did not go through any "stop-time." Perhaps 1932 came close to being just that, and thus made possible the New Deal, which was decried by big business as un-American and then saved the day for it. A transition from unenlightened self-interest to enlightened self-interest is not as painful as business once more seems to assume.

LONGER LIFE, MORE-ANXIOUS DEATH

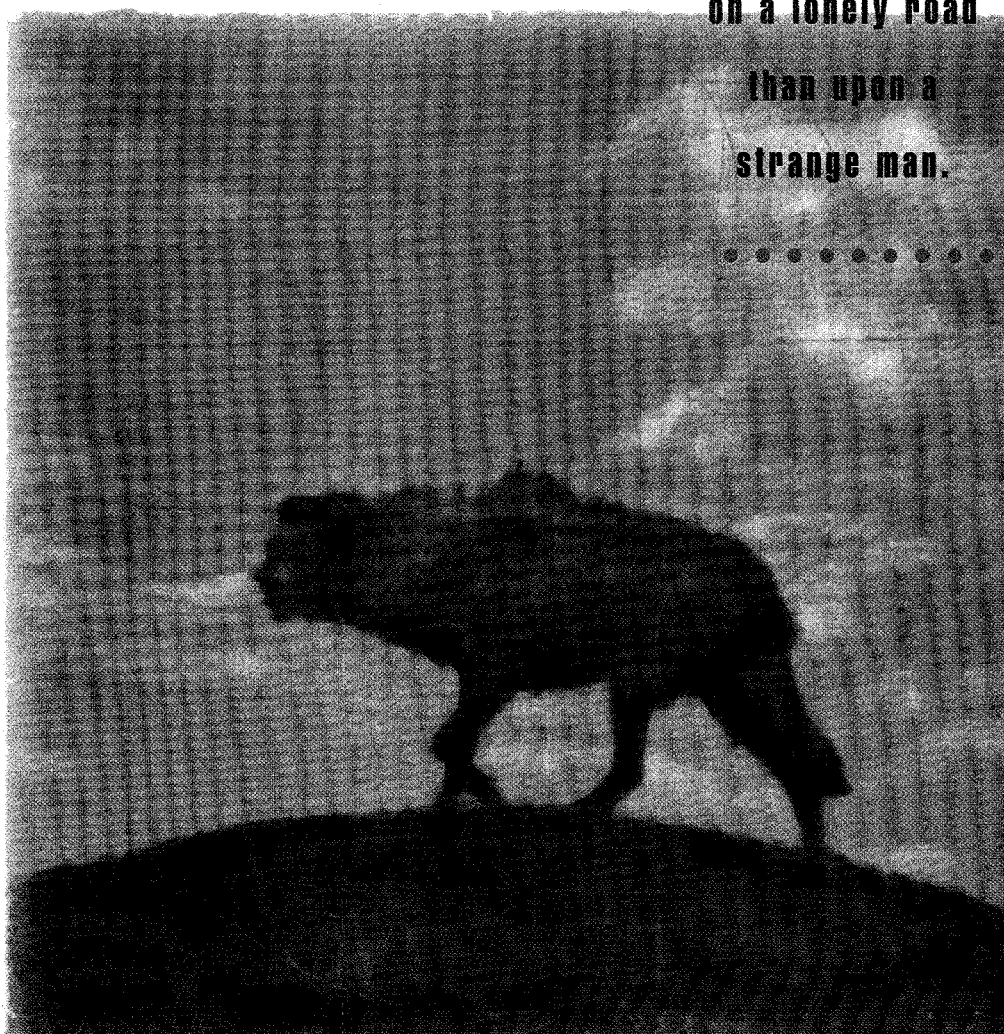
WHEN I entered the British Army, in 1943, one could tell a private soldier and an officer apart even if they'd both appeared in regulation nightshirts.

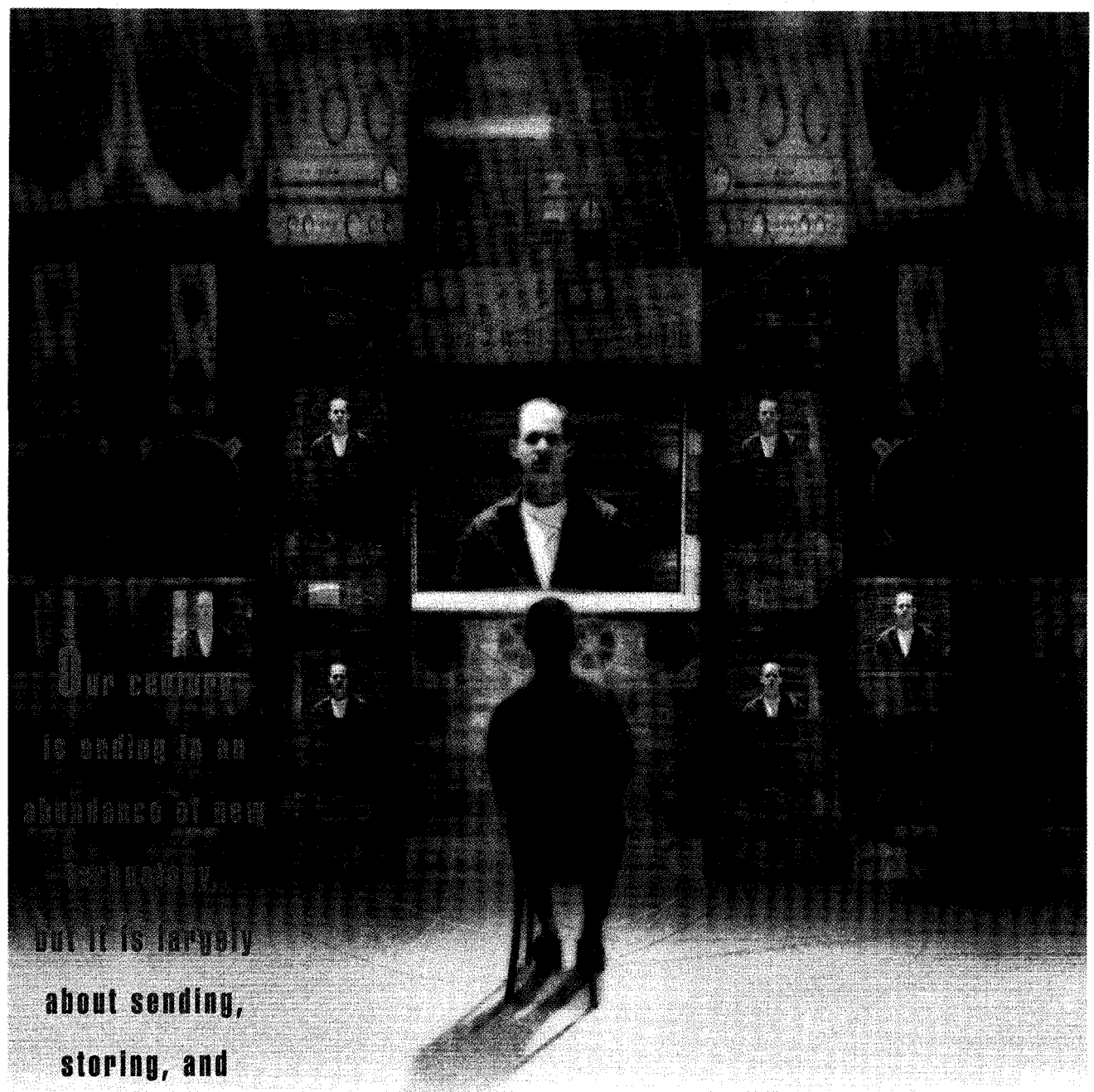
They were like different species: privates as a rule were shorter, looked older than their age, and had bad skin and terrible teeth. During the ensuing war years those differences became less and less, and the same held for civilians. War rations for the poor classes meant not less but more and healthier food. Now, after half a century of free medicine, that glaringly different look of people from different classes has vanished.

During this century the art of medicine has progressed at a fast clip. The famous British surgeon Joseph Lister announced around 1900 a "foreseeable end" to human disease. Unfortunately, he was wrong, and hosts of

viruses have taken a new lease on life (our life), helped along in their travels by our own frantic flying all over the globe. Wilhelm Roentgen's x-rays, which won the first Nobel Prize in physics, in 1901, got us off to a splendid start; the gap between the old and the new medicine can be measured by contemporary comments that it might become possible to photograph the human soul. It didn't, but by 1950 x-rays had saved the lives of some 30 million children, according to the estimate of a later Nobel-winning physicist, Arthur Compton. Sulfa drugs came around 1940, followed by penicillin and other antibiotics and the present armory of

**Man in this
century became
far more
brutish than
any animal. Most
of us would
rather come upon
a wild animal
on a lonely road
than upon a
strange man.**





Our century
is ending in an
abundance of new
technology,
but it is largely
about sending,
storing, and
retrieving
information at
lightning speed, not
about creating.

.....

on individual adults is less startling, because the drop in *infant* mortality in the West is the primary cause of the increase. (It has dropped from one in ten to less than one in a hundred during the first year of life.) But a man of forty will

electronic and chemical tools to fight afflictions that earlier could be mitigated but not cured. The increase in life expectancy tells it—from forty-nine years in 1900 to seventy-five years or more in the late 1990s. The effect

live about five years longer now than he would have in 1950, and he is healthier all along. The state of health of an eighty-year-old man now is comparable to the state of health of a seventy-year-old man twenty years ago.

What all this is doing to our perception of life is not yet clear. According to a 1995 French report, the increasing rarity of death among friends and colleagues “affects people’s religion and their artistic and general look at life. It gives them a certain feeling of immortality.” But, the report says, “they fear the idea of death the more, as it is less present in the collective imagination and seen as an abnormal and resistible phenomenon.” Oddly enough, this is a sort of return to a pre-1914 mentality. I don’t know if in the United States we feel this rarity of death, as we focus so much on criminal violence. And the re-

port does not deal with the appearance of AIDS, which has renewed our acquaintance with the deaths of young people, such as we knew early in the century from tuberculosis.

If in those early days much sickness was incurable, the relationship between doctor and patient (if not a very poor man or woman) was personal, and emotionally very supportive. In biographies and novels of the time we can read how it felt to be gravely ill in the early 1900s and how much a doctor could help to keep people going in some fashion. Ignorance could indeed be bliss in the days when a doctor prescribed a daily glass of red wine or a course of sea baths. Our modern, ever fancier means of treatment of course cost ever more money, and I hope that if and when a lack of resources makes triage unavoidable, as once among the wounded on the battlefield, we would never accept the morality of basing it on a person's wealth—with maybe a black market in which criminals offered organs or whole bodies. Then we would have to make an end to that unlikely mixture of profit-making and lifesaving and lift the whole mess out of the realm of politics.

THE MYSTERIES OF TECHNOLOGY

THE century has given each of us (on average) not only extra years but also extra time within those years. In 1900 the average industrial worker worked half his waking hours and had about 10 percent of them as free time. Now it is about 30 percent work and 50 percent free time. Here in the United States the picture is less clear, because we are not after shortening the work week to cut unemployment, as in Western Europe. On the contrary, employers cut social cost to themselves (and increase social cost to the community) by firing some people and putting the rest on ever more overtime. But the average employee may work about 2,000 hours a year and have 3,000 hours a year (for less than fifty working years) of free time. So much leisure was predicted by the futurists: in 1931 Aldous Huxley, in *Brave New World*, was struggling with the way people would fill those extra hours. Who could have guessed that they would be totally eaten up by looking at a little screen? We actually have less time for civic and communal activities than we did in our pre-TV past; we are now supposedly “bowling alone,” as the sociologist Robert Putnam calls it in his attack on TV—which he feels killed America's civic sense.

My children tell me that my negative attitude toward television simply demonstrates the generation gap, and, indeed, I cannot fathom how they or anyone else can sit there and tolerate the contempt shown to us, the public, in that slush of breathless “messages,” trivial news, canned laughter, humorous weathermen, and all the rest. Part of the explanation must be that people of all generations had been *bored*, unspeakably and unnoticedly bored. (Wherever and whenever daily life in our more recent past became peace-

ful and not too hard, boredom became a philosophical motif. That goes back as far as Schopenhauer.) Images make an impact on even the most passive recipients, and thus we have come to exist within a snowstorm of images. Australian aborigines feared to lose their souls when photographed, and we suffer from the contrary superstition, that things don't really exist unless they're “imagined”—the precise opposite of “imagined.”

In July of last year *The New York Times* wrote about the “famous futurist” Esther Dyson, who had informed the nation's “computer elite” that “intellectual property is likely to lose a lot of its market value.” Why was that? Well, because everyone could now put his or her book or essay or musical composition on the Web, and there would of a sudden be very much more supply than demand. The drop in market value would make “content producers go nuts,” and they would have to go on public-speaking tours, and “go out and milk” their property, to make a living.

There is a nasty misconception here. Our century is ending in an abundance of new technology, but it is largely about sending, storing, and retrieving information at lightning speed, not about creating. We've always been button-holed by people who would tell us “I could write a book” about whatever was occupying them, and thank heaven they didn't. Now they will, but the wisdom and creativity we need so badly will be as scarce as ever.

Few men and women over forty, or possibly of any age, are quite at ease in the present world. People at the start of this century were also living with an outburst of new technology, and the changes from horses and carriages to express trains and automobiles, from letter carriers to telegraphs and telephones, were as bedeviling as anything we have to deal with. But there was a big difference. Then everyone with a modicum of education could comprehend how these new things worked, if perhaps only in a vague way. Steam and combustion engines were contraptions working on simple principles, and once one had accepted that electricity somehow moves at an unimaginable speed, telephones and telegrams fitted in easily too. Semiconductors and microchips are a different kettle of fish. Their workings come from a world of advanced physics and mathematics, where there are no James Watts with tea kettles to illustrate what is going on. The mystery of mathematics is that although it predicts and explains happenings, these same happenings have nothing to do with the logic of daily life, and things might just as well *be* in a totally different way. The people who design this new technology know what follows what, but they cannot “taste” the logic of it, any more than an astronomer can conceive of “the universe” before the Big Bang. We live once more like Stone Age people in a world of mysteries we cannot apprehend, only this time the mysteries are not nature's doings but our own. The trick is not to let it overawe us.

We are an arrogant breed, reaching out from our little

rooftop telescopes into a billion light-years of space; we talk about atoms and electrons as if they were pebbles instead of mathematical inconceivables. No wonder we get dizzy at times. We can tell ourselves, however, that Shakespeare understood much less of Copernicus than we do of Einstein, but it didn't prevent him from feeling that we are admirable, in action like an angel, in apprehension like a god.

A RECKONING

ONE wouldn't want to make two lists for this century, of the good and of the bad, the way Robinson Crusoe did for his island: the bad has been too terrifying to measure it qualitatively against the good. My mother, who managed to get born just within the nineteenth century, taught me that "in the end it's all for the best," the basic credo of her time, and she managed to hold on to that attitude right through a rough life that included five years of German occupation. I have somehow managed to sail under that same flag. I'm not trying to recommend it as a belief to anyone else; accepting it is probably more a matter of one's genes than of its merits. But if we don't believe it, where do we turn?

We have suffered the two most horrendous wars ever waged, plus a string of vicious smaller ones, plus the Holocaust—and I include under that name the Gypsies and the Slavs and the political prisoners and POWs who lived and died together with the Jews. We continue thinking and writing about them, and this must indeed be the only way in which we can master all this in our conscience one future day. We have watched the chaotic undoing of the Russian Revolution, which promised even more than the French Revolution of 1789 and derailed as fatally, and this has lessened the real or perceived need for hypocrisy and expediency in our dealings with other nations. The stream of jingoistic exhortations to which our politicians expose us continues at full strength, however, as they attack the more thinking part of the population (now called "the elite" with a sneer) or, at the least, focus strongly on an uneducated sound-bite audience whom they *think* they are addressing. They aren't, because the men and women "in the street" are cleverer than they, and long ago tuned out politics. In the meantime a revolution of social-democratic responsibility and sharing is holding in a number of countries, from Norway to New Zealand.

Here we had the youth rebellion that went around the world, in which I was a combatant; but now, thirty years later, I fear that its final effect was negative—disillusion on one side, persistent backlash on the other (but we had such high hopes). Yet it seems legitimate to say that we, the people, prevented Vietnam from being bombed into the Stone Age in the winter of 1971–1972, which surely makes it all "for the best."

We have, astonishingly, let ourselves be pushed into a new kind of feudalism, not of land but of real estate, and like the sharecroppers and serfs of old we bring half our harvest

to the lord—to the landlord, that is. Here is a great impoverishment of our lives: our children cannot set up house on their own; a city like New York is virtually closed to struggling artists and writers. Into the lives of every one of us near-anonymous forces enter across all borders, and the only place where they still sing "The Internationale" with conviction is the corporate boardroom. Some changes in the lyrics were unavoidable. Meanwhile, distanced as if on another planet; a Third and a "Fourth World" are drifting away in ragged wars without front lines, in chaos and pain.

We are lonely in the midst of this great anonymous busyness, and focus like idiots on our celebrities, real or so-called, for they seem the only ones both out there where it's happening and yet still living within that community of equals the rest of us long since lost.

Love is still the cement of the human condition, and if in 1900 there was too much discussion of the soul and the spirit in it, all under the flag of a quite hypocritical chastity, now there's an overabundance of mechanics. The term "love" in everyday use and in the popular media has become a code word for the hydrodynamics of the sexual organs. *Confidential Agent*, a 1945 film that reappears every now and then, ends with Charles Boyer kissing Lauren Bacall. He does not take his hat off for this kiss, let alone anything else, but he says to her, "You are restoring my faith." Those words, in that marvelous soft voice he had, carry more passion than the total crop of this year's sex-and-kill movies. Or so I think.

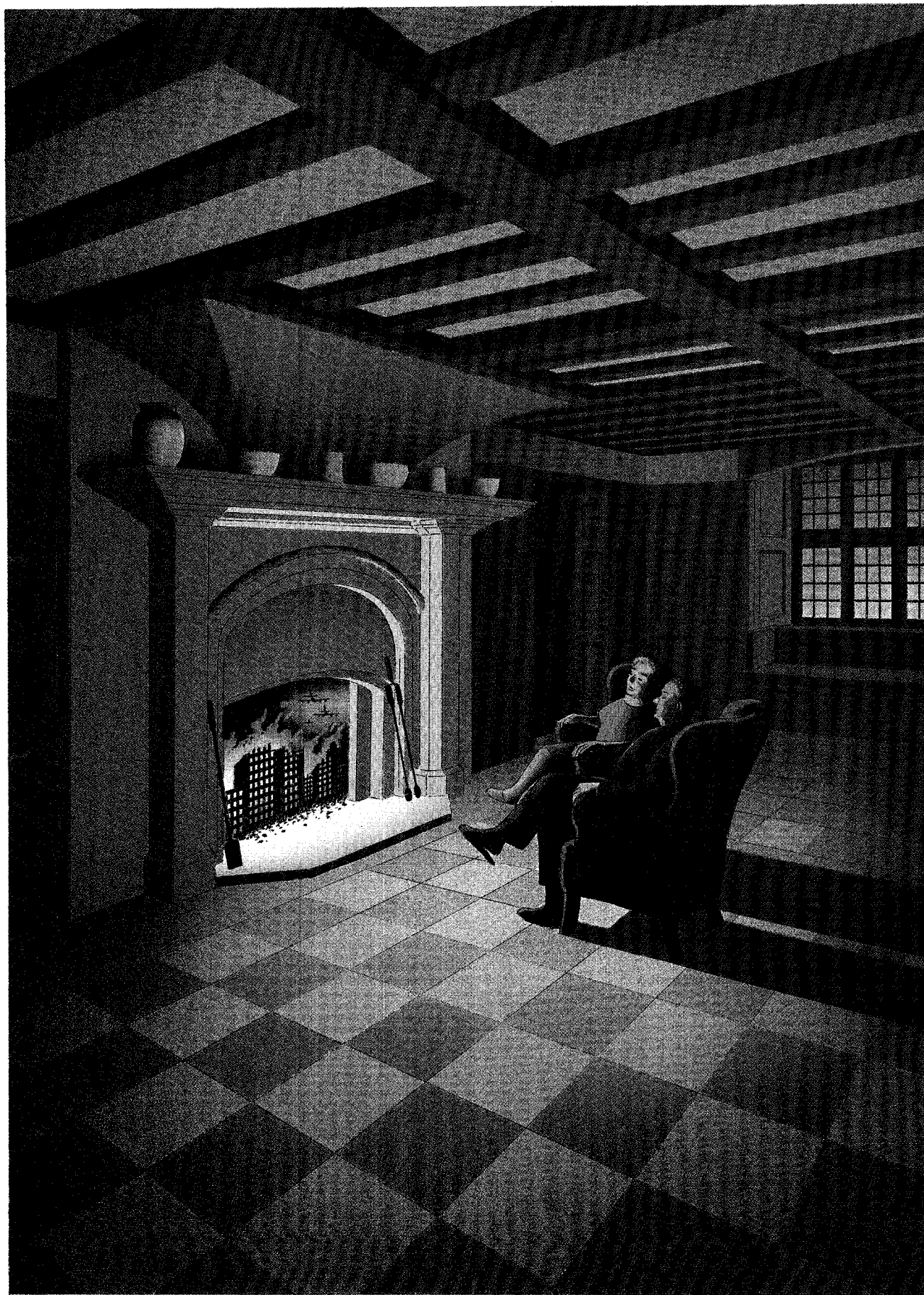
OUR COMMON DECISION

OF course, the division of time is arbitrary, and has as little meaning as a child's chalk mark on an endless road. A year as a unit of time has a natural significance only on our own planet. The decimal system has practicality because we have ten fingers, but there is nothing inevitable about it. Decades and centuries are just bookkeeping units that help us in our ordering and arranging.

Nonetheless, we can assign the twentieth century a visible face, a character. I know what I mean when I write that in 1900 the world was young. Indeed, humanity in our corner of the world has aged through the century—aged by losing a chunk of its innocence and hope, aged also in the sense of matured, by having become wiser because of what we have gone through, less arrogant, less cruel, less biased—if, often, only by being more conscious of how we *should* think and act.

How to wind up these random notes? By asking that we not look at the changes around us in the resigned manner of European peasants or Native Americans watching the railroads invade their lands. The changes presented to us, or put over on us, at the end of the century come from our near neighbors, our fellow men and women. They can be turned to the good or to the bad. They are not fated.

Their perimeters must be our common decision. ☸

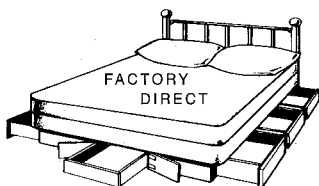


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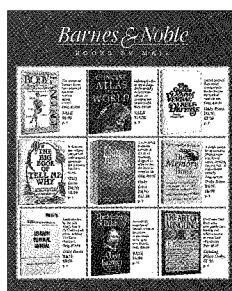
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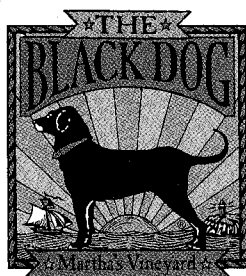
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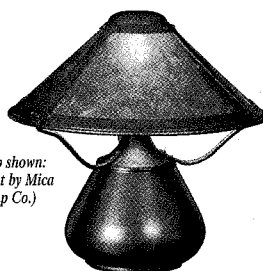
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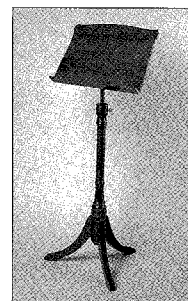
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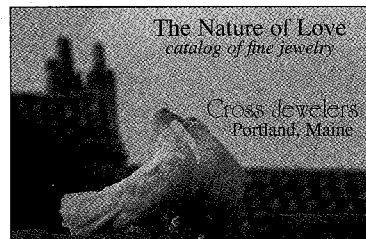
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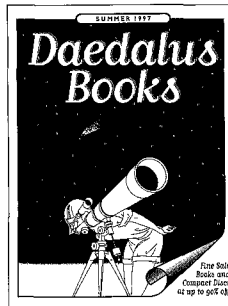
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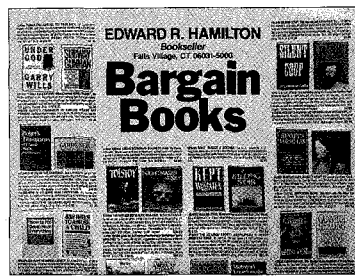
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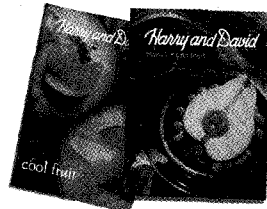
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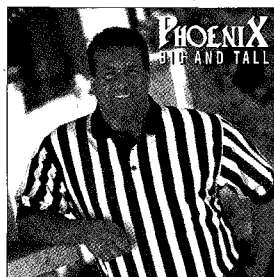
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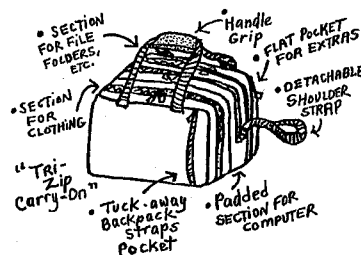
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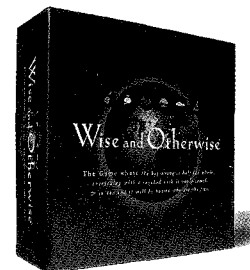
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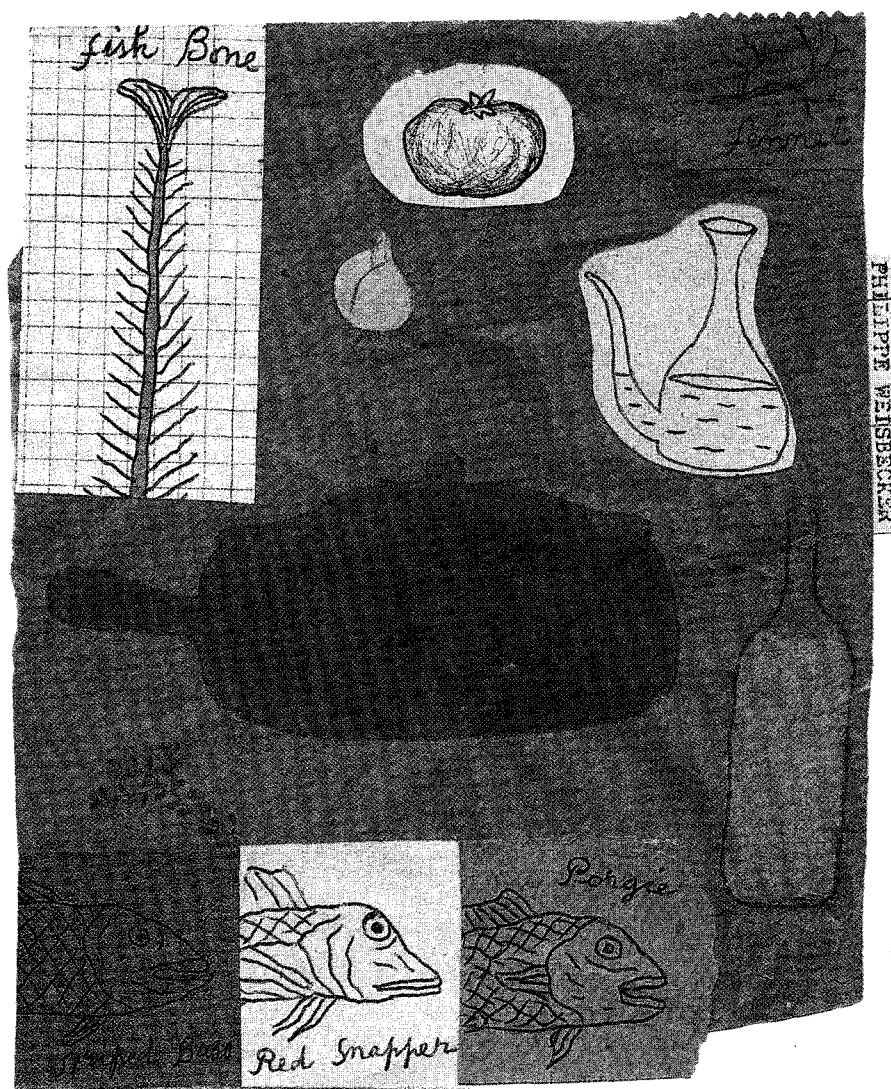
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In a Fishbowl

Even an ocean away from the Mediterranean, anyone can make a bouillabaisse-class soup

A RECENT cooking class in the South of France started to change my opinion of French food. I am well aware that Provence is many people's idea of paradise.

Its cuisine is just now as fashionable as Italy's—in fact, it is taking over, as the pendulum swings back toward what was for centuries the one true cuisine. But I have long been a proud Francoskeptic.

Few discussions raised my hackles

by Corby Kummer

more than those of exactly how to make a bouillabaisse. Why be boorishly precise about a stew created to use fish or fish parts that are either unsalable or too small for any other use? Also, I don't live near a market that sells spiny Mediterranean rockfish.

But then I found myself in the middle of what Richard Olney, the American-born doyen of Provençal cooking, calls in his *French Menu Cookbook* authentic

bouillabaisse country: the region between Toulon and Marseilles. Just down the road from the unusually modest and pleasant hill town of La Cadière-d'Azur is Domaine Tempier, a winery whose mistress,

Lulu Peyraud, is a cook of legendary prowess and the muse of Alice Waters, who started Chez Panisse—the restaurant in Berkeley, California, that inspired a generation of cooks to dream of Provence. In his most recent (and most relaxed) book, *Lulu's Provençal Table*, Olney devotes many pages to Peyraud's definitive bouillabaisse, which is cooked over a wood fire; its preparation is always the centerpiece of a long, hospitable afternoon.

The teacher of my cooking class, a genial and expert cook named René Bérard, who runs the first-rate hotel and restaurant Hostellerie Bérard with his wife, Danièle, actually knows this culinary goddess; the Bérards are longtime friends of the Peyrauds. Almost by accident, then (I was following one of several itineraries recently devised by the French Government Tourist Office [888-665-4373] to mix culture and adventure; I never did learn which heading a cooking class fell under), I was about to make the truest imaginable bouillabaisse.

Having worked alone for less than two hours, following Bérard's remarkably uncomplicated instructions, I sat down to a bowl of clay-red liquid that seemed to concentrate the flavors of the seacoast and the sun: the sting of sea salt, the sweet acidic note of boiled-down wine and tomatoes, the assertive pungency of garlic, and the exotic floral edge of saffron, anchored by the strong, fresh taste of the morning catch. But at first all I saw before me was a heap of glistening, flashily striped little fish.

THAT, of course, was the point. Bouillabaisse, despite the long name, is a dish that anyone can make with a minimum of ingredients and utensils. The catch is that "anyone" is supposed to live somewhere along the French or Italian Riviera, where fishermen troll for fish that have only vague counterparts in North American waters and that only occasionally appear, imported, in U.S. markets—fish like rascasse and grondin.

It is more than possible, though, to make a creditable bouillabaisse-inspired soup in this country. In renouncing all claims to authenticity I follow the example of Gordon Hamersley, a Boston chef who makes superbly concentrated fish soups but who long ago gave up calling them "bouillabaisse," because so many of his customers have unshakable ideas of what that means. Most restaurants that dare to offer "bouillabaisse" in fact serve a cross between bouillabaisse, which depends on long cooking and a quantity of olive oil to create powerful flavor and a thick texture, and which is always served with fish chunks, and soupe de poissons, whose ingredients are less circumscribed and which is lighter in both texture and flavor. Restaurant versions of either soup often call for making a stock with fish bones and root vegetables and then starting over with fresh vegetables and fish for the soup. Bérard showed me a way to save time and still produce a strong, thick soup, with chunks of fish poached just before serving. After researching and trying various Riviera-style fish soups, I find his way the easiest and best.

The first thing is to find some fish bones and, with luck, heads, which add both gelatin and flavor. It's best (probably essential, in fact) to telephone a fish market or supermarket in advance to reserve some. Inconveniently, the bones likeliest to be offered are unsuitable: salmon, since whole farmed salmon are in regular supply. Oily fish like salmon, swordfish, shark, mackerel, and bluefish don't make good stock, although a few chunks of any of these in the final cooking will add flavor and variety, and variety of fish is one of the chief goals of a bouillabaisse—sorry, fish soup. Ask instead for red snapper, probably the best all-around soup fish for the great flavor of the bones, head, and flesh; bass, preferably wild striped but also the easier-to-find farmed Chilean or "black" bass; grouper and porgy, common along the East Coast (Florida pink porgy most resembles the prized Mediterranean fish daurade, according to James Peterson, the author of the comprehensive *Fish & Shellfish*); or haddock, whiting, cusk, cobia, and other uncelebrated firm white fish sometimes sold as "chowder fish." John Dory, the French Saint-Pierre, is perfect for soup but rare. Chunks of eel, sometimes available fresh in Chinese markets or frozen in others, will add

much gelatin and flavor. Avoid flatfish like sole and flounder, which will turn bitter after a half hour or so of cooking.

If you can obtain whole fish and want to practice your filleting technique, use the bones and head for the base and poach the fillets during the final ten minutes. Otherwise, ask the fishmonger to fillet and sell you an assortment of fish that won't fall apart when simmered lightly in a soup. Monkfish, with its firm texture and lobsterlike flavor, is apt; if you can find the nubby trimmings of tail (better yet, the head, though it's fearsome to behold), they will contribute greatly to a satiny feel.

The bones and head must be thoroughly cleaned of gills, blood, and bits of viscera: run cold water over them until it turns clear. Cut the fish frames, as they are called, into lengths of about four inches, thus exposing more gelatin-releasing surfaces to the water. When Rick Moonen, an exuberant chef who specializes in fish at the Manhattan restaurant Oceana, gave me a lesson, he told me to rap the back of a knife against the vertebrae to expose the richest and most gelatinous part of the big grouper frames he had on hand.

Other than fish, the ingredients are few and simple, as befits a dish originally associated with fishing villages. You will need a good deal of olive oil, a Mediterranean staple, which gives the soup body. The olive oil should be light in flavor. Don't use one that is unctuous on the tongue, or the fruity kind good for salads: it will overpower the soup. The full quantity of oil is necessary to achieve the right consistency and flavor. If you want to reduce fat, you can chill the soup overnight or for several days and skim off the oil; the flavor improves after a day.

FOR four pounds of fish bones and heads and two and a half to three pounds of fish fillets, which will serve six as a main course, have ready three quarters of a cup of olive oil; one and a half cups of onion, peeled and roughly diced; a medium head of garlic, sliced in half crosswise to expose a cross-section of each of the cloves (you could peel and smash each clove, but Bérard prepared the garlic this way, and I found it easy and good); half a cup of trimmed and chopped celery; one cup of roughly chopped stalks of fresh bulb fennel, with the fronds washed, chopped, and reserved for a gar-

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nish; one tablespoon of dried herbes de Provence, or any combination of thyme, rosemary, and marjoram; one bay leaf or, if you can find them at a Greek or Middle Eastern market, two European bay laurel leaves, whose flavor is much different and milder (on a recent trip to Crete, I fell in love with these bay leaves, which grow as luxuriantly there as the wild greens on which many of the island's residents have subsisted for centuries, and which are becoming a mania among avant-garde chefs); half a teaspoon of stem saffron (that is, the filaments of flower pistils, not a red ground mixture, which is likely to be adulterated); half a teaspoon of hot red-pepper flakes; two cups of an acidic white wine; and four cups of ripe tomatoes, cut into chunks with the stems removed, or three cups of drained and rinsed canned tomatoes, or two cups of tomato puree (I like the Pomì brand, which is sold in aseptic packages).

Either before or just after you start making the soup base, prepare a marinade for the fish fillets (keep on the skin, which will hold the chunks together when they are cooked) with an additional cup of finely minced bulb fennel, three or four tablespoons of olive oil, half a teaspoon of saffron, salt and pepper to taste, and, for an authentic touch, two tablespoons of pastis, Pernod, or other anise-flavored liqueur (anise is too syrupy). Do not add lemon juice, which will begin to "cook" the fish, as in a seiche. Toss together well, cover, and set aside in the refrigerator. The fennel will cook along with the flavored fish during the last five to ten minutes; the saffron will have suffused the fish, and will add a final and important burst of flavor to the soup.

Warm the olive oil for the stock in a large, heavy pot (enameled cast iron is ideal) and add the onion, garlic, celery, and fennel. The fennel that helped to make bouillabaisse famous is wild fennel, which looks like big stalks of dill and has a less sweet, sharper anise flavor than cultivated bulb fennel; it grows on California roadsides but is hard to find at markets. Depending on your love of garlic, add either half or the whole head; it will sweeten as it cooks, and its flavor is essential to the soup. Cook this mixture, partly covered, stirring often, over medium heat until the vegetables begin to exude their liquids and turn translucent. Do not let them brown.

Place the cleaned bones and heads over the vegetables one layer at a time, sprinkling each layer with coarse salt (sea salt is ideal) to draw out flavor and make the soup savory. Place the herbs, bay leaf, and saffron just below the top layer of bones. Add the hot pepper flakes to taste. I've recently become enamored of the sweetly nuanced heat of crushed red pepper from Kahramanmaraş, a city in southeastern Turkey, which is being sold through Zingerman's (the mail-order number is 313-769-1625). Several food scholars and Mediterranean mavens, including Paula Wolfert and Aglaia Kremezi, fell in love with this rare and superb chili, and urged that it be imported. The flakes are a beautiful copper-rust color, like saffron.

Wine strengthens the flavor of the soup, and so I recommend using it, especially if you haven't made the soup before—although, like Bérard, I prefer the clear flavor of water only. Add the two cups of wine and then water to bring the liquid just below the surface of the bones. You could add two more tablespoons of Pernod or pastis from the bottle, saving an additional tablespoon to add at the end; or you could be French and flame the liqueur in a small pan, pouring it hot over the fish bones. Bring to a simmer and cook, partly covered, for twenty minutes. Add the tomatoes and boil, partly covered, for another forty-five minutes to an hour. More time won't hurt. This long and hard boiling is when the oil binds with the other components, giving the soup its uniquely thick texture.

I TRIED several ways of pureeing the soup. My favorite is still the one Bérard demonstrated, and the one any French home cook would use: pass the soup, bones and all, through a food mill and then through a sieve. (Cheesecloth would trap the oil and thin the texture.) Cranking the soup through a food mill is admittedly easier with small Mediterranean fish bones than with big Atlantic ones. If you do use a food mill, remove large heads and big pieces of bone first.

Today in most households the food mill has been supplanted by the food processor. My experiments using one resulted in a grainy, chalky texture even after I passed the puree through a sieve; I don't recommend it. I had far better results pureeing about a quarter of the soup

in a blender, a method I do recommend to thicken it. You'll need to remove any heads or large pieces of bone beforehand (and take care, of course, not to overfill the container, especially if the liquid remains hot). Then pour the remainder of the soup (or all of it, if you have neither a blender nor a food mill) through a large strainer or colander, mashing the solids with a wooden spoon. Remove the fillets from the refrigerator and allow them to come to room temperature.

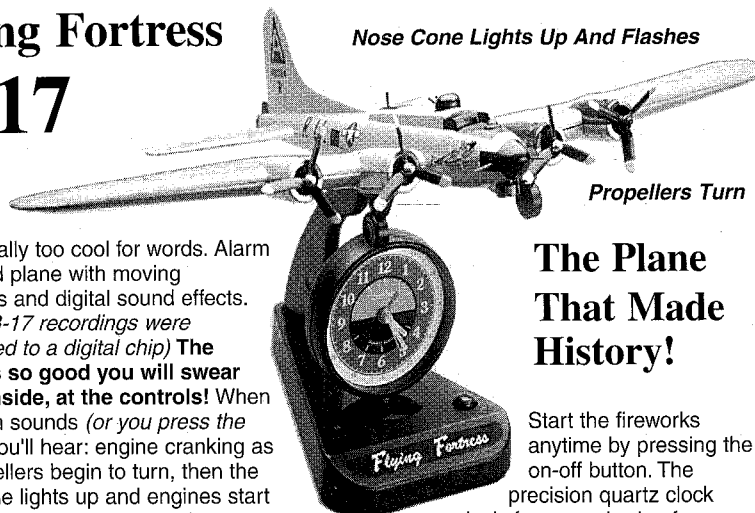
Return the pureed soup to a clean pot and bring to a simmer. If you like, add two cups of thick-sliced waxy potatoes (the kind for potato salad, which hold their shape) and simmer them for twenty minutes to a half hour before adding the fish. Otherwise add the fish fillets along with their marinade and simmer for five to ten minutes, just until they turn opaque. An elegant way to serve the soup is to lift out the cooked chunks and lay several at the bottom of each soup bowl, decorate them with chopped fennel tops, and bring the soup to the table in a tureen to be ladled into each bowl.

In Provence bouillabaisse is at least a two-course meal. First diners put into the empty soup bowl a rough-sliced, oven-dried or grilled piece of bread smeared with aioli, the garlic mayonnaise, or its cousin rouille, a sauce flavored with red pepper as well as garlic and thickened with bread crumbs; when the soup is ladled over the bread, the emulsified sauce further thickens the soup. Then the cook passes separately the fish chunks (a swell bouillabaisse features as a showpiece a whole fish, poached in the soup in the last twenty minutes), and potatoes if there are any. Diners take more soup and more bread and aioli and carry on. (For several variations on the now-ubiquitous aioli and rouille and a cogent explanation of how they differ, see Barbara Kafka's *Party Food*.)

I prefer simply serving toasted country bread drizzled with olive oil and, for garlic-lovers, rubbed with a fresh halved garlic clove, even if raw garlic at serving time is untraditional. Few things are as elemental and Mediterranean as bread, tomatoes, olive oil, and garlic. A fish soup laced with saffron and made in my own kitchen, even with Atlantic fish, easily carries me back to the genial M. Bérard and his iridescent bounty from the morning's catch. ☼

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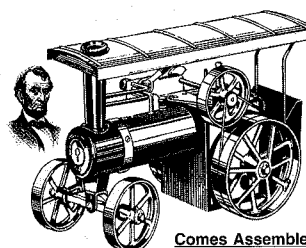
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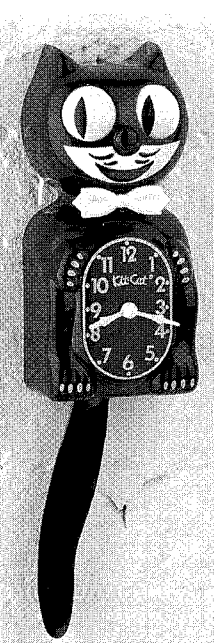
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Across. a. P + IE(C)EMEAL (a melee I anag.); B + EAGLE; SEA(U)RCH + IN; SCHU + SS (such anag.) b. LE(GUM)E; EG + GNOG (rev.); SLOUGH (double def.); LUMBER (double def.); OOMP(A)H c. M(INCE)D (Nice anag.); REH + IRE (her rev.); MA(X)INE; I + N(FIR)M; LI + BID + O d. S(ID)LED; NUR + SERIES (run rev.); END + EAR; UNDERSSELL (anag.) Down. 1. PAL + MIST; FE(IGN)ED (gin anag.) 2. IMPEDED (hidden); CHUCK + LE 3. LEG + HORN; VETERAN (anag.) 4. E + BON(I)ES; A(L)GE + BRA 5. G(A + SM)AIN; XER(O)XES 6. F(A + THE)AD; S(QUIRE)D 7. (r)OUT(L)INE; CO(M + FOR)T 8. H(A BIT)UE; UN(A + RM)ED (nude anag.) 9. RH(OMB)US (mob anag. in rush anag.); STOL(L)EN

A Subversive Sympathy

The stories of Peter Taylor and the illusions they bring to life

by Robert Wilson

AFTER Peter Taylor died, in the fall of 1994, I went back to the books on which his literary reputation will most likely rely: his *Collected Stories* (1969) and the three short-story collections that appeared after it. His 1986 novel, *A Summons to Memphis*, won him a Pulitzer Prize, a major international award, and many more readers than most short-story writers ever hope to have, but he may have written it and the novel *In the Tennessee Country*, which was published just before his death, in order to preserve his shorter fiction. Before he wrote his own novels, Taylor would say about his friends Katherine Anne Porter, whose *Ship of Fools* (1962) was a best seller, and Eudora Welty, whose *The Optimist's Daughter* (1972) also won a Pulitzer, that the audiences for those books had made secure both writers' "real work," as he called their stories. He would also say that novels are not quite respectable, that they lack the rigor of the story, and, later, that novels were fun to write because you could put anything in them that popped into your head. Taylor made these statements humorously, as was his way, but he felt, I think, that there was more than a germ of truth in them.

The edition of the *Collected Stories* that I grabbed off my shelf was a 1986 Penguin paperback, which Taylor had inscribed to my wife, Martha, and me. I'd forgotten the inscription, and could not remember having been in Gainesville, Florida, where he and his wife, Eleanor, had a home, on January 8, 1986—"my 79th birthday," the inscription said. I assumed at first that I must have been there,

because it was not at all like Taylor to sign a book and send it to us; he had given us other books, but had signed them only at our request. And then the solution to this small mystery struck me: Taylor had died at seventy-seven, so the inscription was deliberately untrue. I remembered then that when he turned sixty-nine, he told me that he had decided to tell everyone he was seventy-nine, so that

locked in the time and place of his youth and young manhood—Memphis and Nashville in the 1920s and 1930s and 1940s—but fixed upon the world of his elders, whose ways had made his world. This very fixation amounted to a kind of deception in itself, because one might conclude from the intensity with which he focused on the older world that he also admired it almost unreservedly. He



they would think how well he looked for his age. Presumably he had liked this joke so much that he had signed and mailed out copies of the new edition in order to slip it into the inscriptions.

As I began to reread the familiar stories, with their stately pace and mildly antique diction, it occurred to me how appropriate Taylor's straight-faced little deception was, not only for the *Collected Stories* but for all of his work. His imagination was always older than his years,

did admire it—madly, as he might have said—but that is not the whole story. Finally, again and again in his work he would push through this admiration and come to a deep vein of disillusionment about the assumptions under which his parents' generation of southern urban sophisticates labored. Thus Peter Taylor's work, which seems so much in sympathy and of a piece with this past, is deeply subversive of it. That's his big joke, to go with the little joke of his inscription.

THE Taylor family has lived in Tennessee since before it became a state, and Peter could trace his family back to even before they came to Tennessee from Virginia. Family history is of course a southern obsession, but Peter's interest in Taylor and Tennessee history was perhaps enlivened by the public role the Taylors had traditionally played in the state. One of Peter's grandfathers, who would later become a U.S. senator, took part in a legendary political race in the 1880s—known as Tennessee's War of the Roses—when he ran against his brother for governor of Tennessee. The two men traveled around the state together, sometimes even sharing a bed when the accommodations required it, and ripped into each other on the hustings. A century later Peter's brother ran for the same office.

But Taylor himself fell in with legendary literary people. He was born in the country town of Trenton, Tennessee, in 1917, but lived for most of his youth in Nashville, St. Louis, and Memphis, where in 1936 he became a student of the poet Allen Tate, at Southwestern. Soon he enrolled at Vanderbilt, where he met the poet and renowned New Critic John Crowe Ransom. When Ransom was lured away to Kenyon College, in Ohio, Taylor followed him, as did the young poet Randall Jarrell, who became an instructor at Kenyon. Robert Lowell, who had been at Harvard, also went to Kenyon, where he became Taylor's roommate. Taylor, Lowell, and Jarrell would be lifelong friends. Later Taylor went with Lowell and his new wife, the novelist Jean Stafford, to Louisiana State University, where Robert Penn Warren was teaching and co-editing *The Southern Review* with Cleanth Brooks. Stafford and Warren would also be Taylor's friends for life.

Taylor published his first story in a small, short-lived magazine called *River*, in 1937. One of Eudora Welty's first published stories appeared in the same issue. Soon he was publishing regularly in the *Kenyon Review*, *Sewanee Review*, and *The Southern Review*. His first book of stories, *A Long Fourth*, appeared in 1948, with a glowing and perceptive introduction by Warren. For the next four and a half decades Taylor continued to write and publish stories. During this time he taught at Kenyon with Ransom, at the University of North Carolina at Greens-



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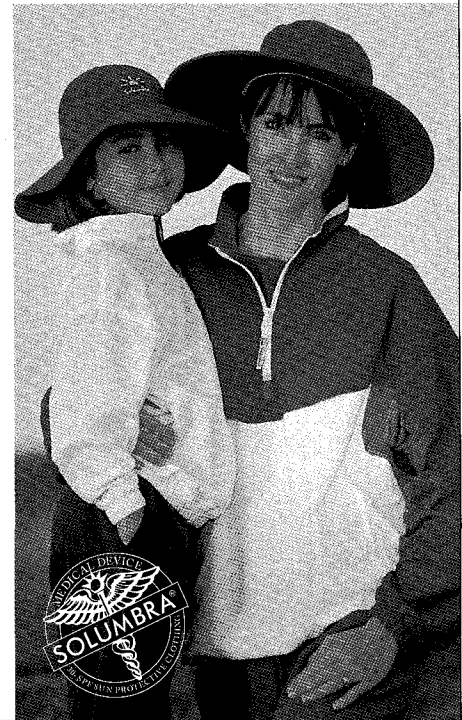
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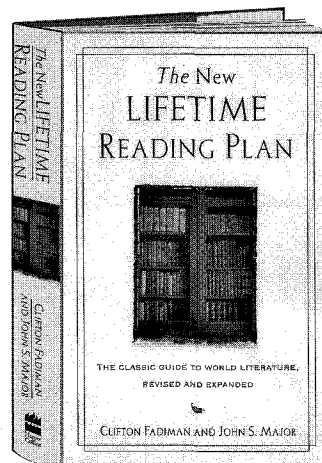
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boro with Jarrell, and at Harvard with Lowell. Eventually he settled in Charlottesville, after William Faulkner's stint at the University of Virginia in the 1960s. Taylor was made Commonwealth Professor of English at Virginia in 1967, and taught there until his retirement, in 1983.

By the time I became his student, in 1975, he had already suffered a serious heart attack (his 1977 collection, *In the Miro District*, was dedicated to his heart doctor, "for an extension of time"), and he had many health problems during the two decades that I was his friend. I'm tempted to say that in those years he enjoyed poor health, because to him everything was an opportunity for humor and enjoyment. He would refer with a mischievous smile to a painful and mysterious hip ailment, which sometimes made it impossible for him to walk, as his "hipatitis." The last time I saw him, in a hospital bed with his final illness, I joked that I would be in serious trouble with his wife if I stayed very long, to which he instantly replied, his tongue thick after a series of strokes, "You'll be in serious trouble with me if you don't." In spite of his poor health and the difference in our ages of nearly four decades, he was the liveliest companion I have ever had. A quick lunch with him at some little dive could be memorable for its inspired silliness or his serious thoughts about writing or his reminiscences about his literary friends. When I had the remarkable good luck to accompany him to Paris, where he was to receive an award, and we were put up for five days in adjoining rooms at the Ritz (he had had his first stroke by then, and needed, as he told me when he asked me to go, "someone to button my right cuff"), we would talk from early morning to late at night, and I never once wished for the talk to stop.

I've often wondered what made the years that separated us unimportant when we were together. It was not just that he had such *joie de vivre*, or that he could listen almost as well as he could talk, or that he seemed to like my company. I think it was partly that we both had such strong fathers, from whom we were in an unending state of rebellion. We both thought of ourselves in some essential way as sons. Taylor came from a line of lawyers and businessmen and those politicians, to whom the artist's life cannot have seemed very serious or very real. I think of the bit-

ter lines from Yeats's "Adam's Curse": "For to articulate sweet sounds together / Is to work harder than all these, and yet / Be thought an idler by the noisy set / Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen / The martyrs call the world." Although Taylor wrote perhaps a hundred stories, many of which appeared in his eight collections; three novels; two book-length plays; and perhaps a dozen shorter plays, and although the themes and settings of these many works of course varied, his larger subjects were related to this sense of himself as a rebellious son. His persistent theme was how the world into which he had been born, lodged between the Old South and the New—that is, the world of his parents' generation, born in the nineteenth century and living well into the twentieth—failed to live up to the illusions of either.

MUCH contemporary literary theory begins with the assumption that the writer does not know what he or she is writing or does not understand the implications of his or her words. The writer is a naïf, and the work is a bundle of unexamined assertions and, indeed, prejudices. Yet to the reader unencumbered by such theories, it is almost the definition of a serious literary artist that he or she tests prevailing notions and undermines the status quo by coming to a richer, subtler, more humane or more moral view of it than the view taken by those who live under its dictates. The best writers deconstruct their worlds even as they construct them.

Whether or not one accepts this as a general rule, it applies indisputably to Peter Taylor. I doubt whether any Marxist critic could be more aware than he of the way in which class can both divide people and bind them, how it can underlie and undermine every social relationship. Take, for example, Taylor's wonderful story "The Old Forest." Nat Ramsey, a "well-brought-up" young Memphis man, finds himself caught between Caroline Braxley, his "society girl" fiancée, and Lee Ann Deehart, "a girl who was not in the Memphis debutante set" but rather a member of a group known "facetiously and somewhat arrogantly" to Nat and his friends as the "Memphis demimonde." Because Nat narrates the story, although from the perspective of many years later, it reeks of

just the sort of naiveté about such matters that a critic might gleefully latch on to. And yet the story is informed throughout by a sophistication about class and its destructive assumptions which Taylor keeps right at the edge of his narrator's awareness. Thus we see the snobbery of the young Nat, the growing understanding in the older Nat of what that snobbery means, and, always, the exquisite and complicated attunement to class that the writer himself has. As one example of the story's complications, consider its central action: Lee Ann's disappearance after an automobile collision turns out to be the result not, as the reader expects, of Nat's callousness, or even of Lee Ann's resentment of Caroline, but of Lee Ann's own snobbery. Her grandmother owns a juke joint outside town, and Lee Ann is afraid that news of the accident will reveal her family background, which she and her grandmother have tried to hide. There are other social undercurrents in the story: Lee Ann's grandmother takes special care of the rich boys who show up in her place with their "demimondaines." The city fathers, out of a secret admiration for the spirit of freedom in girls like Lee Ann, feel a special obligation to protect them.

Another reading of "The Old Forest" could be made from the point of view of gender. Here, too, Nat is the naïf, a character both mystified and fascinated by the behavior of Lee Ann and Caroline, neither of whom acts by the unexamined rules of gender relations that prevail in Nat's day. Again, the young Nat embodies these values, and the older Nat, who narrates, has come to disavow them. "The Old Forest" is finally as much about both the powerlessness and the sources of power of women as it is about anything else. At its end Nat and Caroline drive out of modern Memphis as fast as their car will take them, on Bristol Highway,

the old road that shot more or less diagonally across the long hinterland that is the state of Tennessee. It was the road along which many of our ancestors had first made their way from Virginia and the Carolinas to Memphis, to settle into the forest wilderness along the bluffs above the Mississippi River.

They are driving, as even Nat himself realizes, deep into their own history. As the

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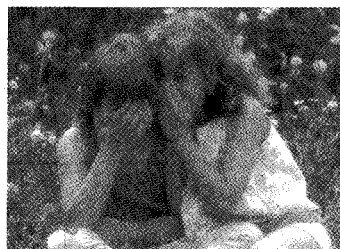


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small towns and crossroads go whizzing past, Caroline begins an extraordinary speech about the difference between girls like her and girls like Lee Ann. At the heart of this difference is Caroline's awareness of the past into which she and Nat are driving. As a creature of that past, Caroline is limited by its tenets in her relations with men. "But," she tells Nat,

"with girls like Lee Ann and Lucy and Betsy it's all different. They have made their break with the past. Each of them had had the strength and intelligence to make the break for herself. But now they have formed a sort of league for their own protection. How I do admire and envy them! And how little you understand them, Nat. How little you understand Lee Ann's loneliness and depression and bravery. She and all the others are wonderful—even Fern. They occupy the real city of Memphis as none of the rest of us do. They treat men just as they please. And not the way men are treated in our circles. And men like them better for it. . . . Naturally we fear them. Those of us who are not like them in temperament—or in intelligence, because there is no use in denying it—we must fear them and find a means to give delaying action."

As Caroline implies, Lee Ann's friends have protected her from various delegations who have gone looking for her: Nat himself, Nat with the city fathers, and Nat with a couple of policemen, who are also obviously in sympathy with the middle-class girls. Caroline sees that if her wedding is to take place, if she is to achieve the conventional sort of power that comes from marrying well, she will have to behave unconventionally and find Lee Ann herself. This she does, using her intelligence, her audacity, and, finally, her sense of the solidarity of all women in a world run by men. In short, she behaves like one of the demimondaines.

It amazes me how much larger a story like "The Old Forest" is than what can be said about it, how effortlessly it embodies the knowledge in these critical approaches, and yet how well it accomplishes its real goals—of drawing us into and through a complicated narrative, making us care about people whom we might otherwise easily dismiss, and leaving us with a vivid sense of a world that is better and worse than we might have thought. ☞

High School and the New Jobs

by Ralph Whitehead Jr.

TEACHING THE NEW BASIC SKILLS:

Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy

by Richard J. Murnane and
Frank Levy. *The Free Press*,
250 pages, \$24.00.

A DECADE ago a citizens' commission that included such luminaries as Hillary Rodham Clinton and William Julius Wilson issued a report called *The Forgotten Half*. Its title denoted the 50 percent of young workers whose formal education ended in high school. At the time, hard data had begun to appear revealing what we now call the wage gap. As a later study showed, in the years from 1979 to 1987 younger male workers with a high school education or less experienced a sharp fall in pay, and the gap between their earnings and those of younger college graduates tripled. This half of the generation needs help, the report said, and it described some forms the help might take.

In retrospect what's striking about this report on new high school graduates is its cursory treatment of their years in high school. Such treatment is striking not because it's unusual but because it has since become so common—in part, perhaps, because the running story of the wage gap seems to teach a clear lesson: As an economic credential the high school diploma is dead. Or, more precisely, high school is rarely enough by itself to equip one to earn a middle-class income. A knowledge economy requires knowledge workers, and what it takes to be one is a four-year-college degree. Given this lesson, it's not surprising that most discussion of the work prospects of high school graduates focuses on how to get more of them to college. President Bill Clinton assumes that the cost of college is what

holds off a lot of those who don't go, and he has argued for the creation of tax breaks that could partly offset the cost.

Few academic economists have done more to track the fall of high school graduates' earnings than Frank Levy, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, whose findings on this and related subjects have gained wide currency. In a sample of fifty media stories from the past ten years on such topics as the changing size of the middle class, the economic status of the Baby Boom, how young people are doing relative to their parents, and how the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, half might contain Levy's numbers, with or without attribution. In the work he did in the 1980s on high school graduates' earnings, Levy didn't argue that a high school diploma is no longer a credential, but his findings appeared to be consistent with this view—and as they spread through the media, they probably lent some support to it.

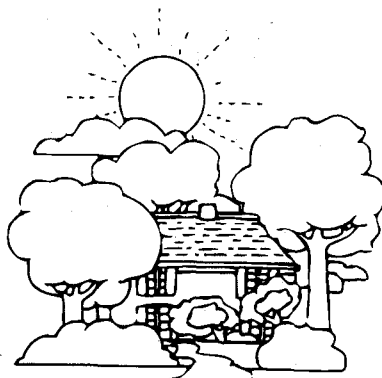
Now, however, in *Teaching the New Basic Skills*, Levy and a frequent collaborator, Richard Murnane, an economist at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, directly assess this view. Yes, they say, a high school education is no longer enough to earn a middle-class living—but that doesn't have to be true.

MURNANE and Levy begin by accepting familiar premises: As the economy of the 1970s gave way to the economy of the 1980s, the nature of frontline work, such as making cars or handling insurance claims, baking bread or repairing photocopiers, shifted. Jobs consisting of routine steps that could be performed by high school graduates began to require the use of discretion. Many of these upgraded jobs pay middle-class wages, but not all new high school graduates can do the head work. They are left with the remaining routine jobs, usually at low wages.

Through their fieldwork on upgraded jobs in factories and offices, and a review of earlier studies of them, the authors identify six skills that the new jobs require—the new basic skills of the book's title. Reading at a ninth-grade level and doing math at a ninth-grade level are two of them, and one or both of these skills play a direct role in three more: solving problems, communicating

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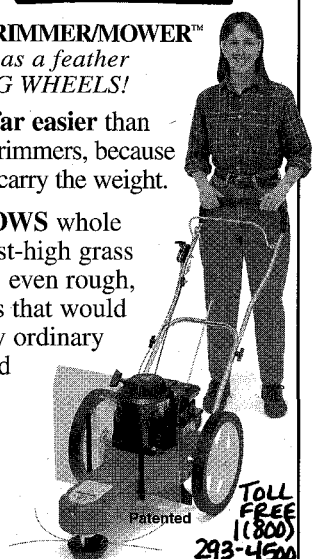
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orally and in writing, and using a computer for word processing and other tasks. The sixth is the ability to collaborate in diverse groups.

High school students usually aren't tested on all six (some of the six don't lend themselves to machine-readable tests), but they are tested on the cornerstone skills of reading and math. The scores, Murnane and Levy say, paint "a sobering picture: close to half of all seventeen-year-olds cannot read or do math at the level needed to get a job in a modern automobile plant." The authors don't say this, but it's likely that many of the seventeen-year-olds who read and do math well enough for such jobs are the students who go on to college. Thus the ones who seek work right out of high school are chiefly those students who don't score well. The shortfall in reading and math has two damaging consequences that combine in a vicious circle: Given what they see in their pool of job applicants, employers are reluctant to hire new high school graduates for upgraded jobs. Given the visible failure of those in school ahead of them to get good jobs, students in junior high and early high school believe that what they do in class has no value. There is no incentive to learn reading and math. This extends the pattern that puts off employers.

The vicious circle needn't exist, the authors suggest; reading and math are in fact worth learning, because they have enough value to bring a high school graduate a wage of, say, \$30,000 a year. The authors analyze wage data for the high school classes of 1972 and 1980. They examine the difference fundamental to the wage-gap story, of course: high school versus college. But they also examine the impact of reading skills and math skills among the class members who did not go on to college.

Two years out of school the workers with only a high school education demonstrated little variation in their earnings. This suggests that they had yet to distinguish themselves as individuals in the eyes of the labor market. Six years after graduation, however, their earnings had begun to spread out. This suggests that the added four years allowed them to start to show what they could do. Moreover, the high earners proved to be those who got high test scores in high school, and the low earners

were those who got low scores. The differences in high school skills presumably explain the differences in earnings.

There was also a difference between the two high school classes. The wage gap between high scorers and low scorers in the class of 1980 was greater than the gap in the class of 1972. So the reward for having reading and math skills rose in the intervening eight years. Although employers became less likely to reward young high school graduates, high scorers in the class of 1980 made the cut anyhow—less because of their diplomas, presumably, than because of their performance.

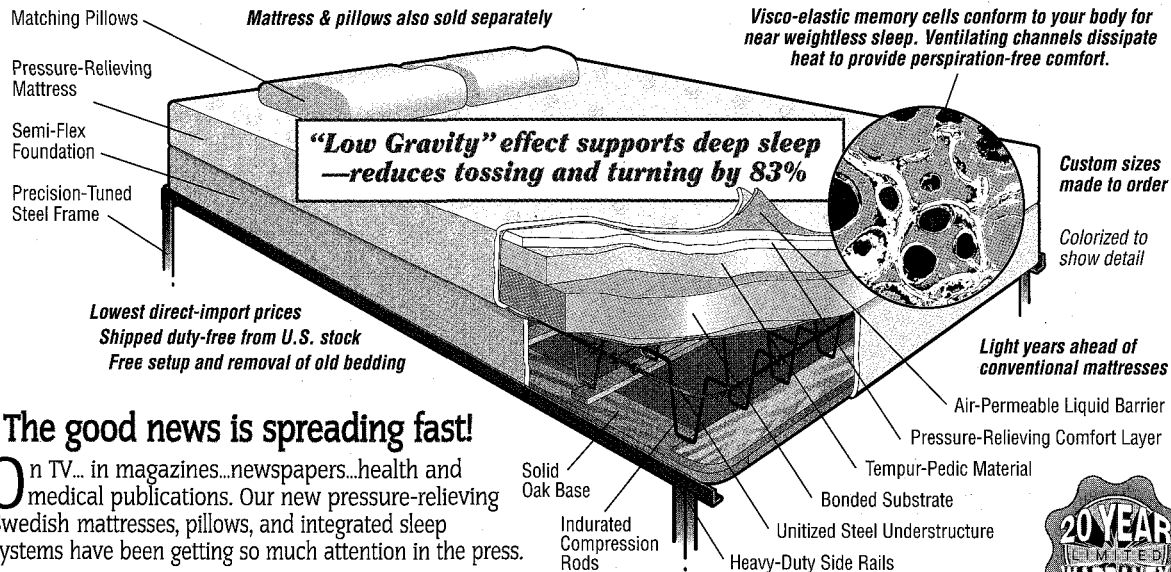
In Murnane and Levy's comparison of high school graduates with the members of their class who got college degrees, the wage gap between college-educated women and all high school-educated women is 20 percent greater for the class of 1980 than for the class of 1972. But when college women are compared with high-scoring high school women only, the growth in the gap disappears. This doesn't mean that the high school women earned as much as the college women, but it does mean that their earnings grew at the same rate as the earnings of college women, which in turn suggests that their ability to meet the new demands of employers paralleled the ability of the college women to do the same. When the college men of 1980 are compared with high-scoring high school men only, a third of the growth in the gap between high school men and college men disappears. This is the key finding in *The New Basic Skills*: the skills that explain much of the growth in the wage gap between high school and college workers can be learned by students *before they finish high school*. As the book argues, reading and math and the other four skills "could be taught to most students."

Sometimes they are, of course. Ninth-grade reading, ninth-grade math, and writing are newly valued in frontline work, but they clearly aren't new to the schools. Other skills would be new only in that they're no longer widely taught today: how to solve semi-structured problems, how to make oral presentations. The true additions are computer skills and the ability to work in diverse groups.

If Murnane and Levy are right, what it takes to earn a middle-class living

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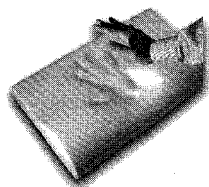


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needn't be a two-year or four-year degree or a training certificate; a K-12 education can impart these skills, increasing the share of students who master them and get the kinds of math and reading scores that were achieved by the high scorers in the classes of 1972 and 1980. Teaching necessary skills, the authors assert, should be the chief objective of our schools.

At first glance this book's key finding, set against the apparent lesson of the wage-gap story, looks counterintuitive, and though such findings make good reading, they're usually hard to sell in public debate. In the debate on how the nation should target efforts to help its forgotten half, the case for college dominates. Period. Consider how high school graduates vote with their feet. Since publication of *The Forgotten Half* the share of graduates who go to college has risen from 57 percent to 62 percent. Nevertheless, this book's plea for the new basic skills to be taught in high

school can run with, rather than against, the college tide.

If we add to the public subsidy for public colleges, we might see a modest increase in the share of students who go to college because they'll now be able to afford to go, but we won't do much for those who can't go on because they can't do college work and are thus consigned to low-wage jobs. If we can create more high school graduates with the new basic skills, we can give those who don't go on a better chance at the upgraded jobs. And we can also add to the share of graduates who go on to college and get academic traction there. What it takes to qualify for a job in a modern auto plant or at an airline ticket counter is probably pretty close to what it takes to do the work in the majority of the nation's colleges today. As such workplaces have become more demanding, college has become less so. Show me a high school senior with the new basic skills, and I'll show you someone who is a sound college prospect. ☘

BRIEF REVIEWS



Shakespeare's Shakespeare

by John C. Meagher.

Continuum, 240 pages, \$34.50.

The author's "intent is to provide a general survey of the principles of Shakespeare's dramaturgy" and thereby enable readers of the plays to understand how they were constructed and why discrepancies and lacunae occur in the texts. He describes the wide-open Elizabethan stage, the practice of doubling roles, the unbroken action, and the absence of any concern for the classically derived unities—a point that has worried earnest scholars ever since Ben Jonson. Much of this information is useful, some of it is needlessly belabored (the author is a professor of Eng-

lish and theology, and professors often forget that a reading audience does not need time to take notes), and all of it adds up to one very sound point. Shakespeare was an actor, a playwright, and a part owner of a theatrical company. In all three capacities he abhorred a dead house and a silent box office. He meant to keep his audience alert, excited, surprised, worried, or distressed, but always to send them home pleased with a fine show—and to that end he would do anything that made the show work. The play really was the thing. It is a refreshingly clearheaded way of approaching Shakespeare. It compels a reader to admit that whatever Freudian, Jungian, Marxist, or feminist meanings he finds in a play are his own responsibility.

A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World

by Stanley Kramer with
Thomas M. Coffey.

Harcourt Brace, 262 pages,
\$25.00.

Mr. Kramer's Hollywood is not mad in the least. His memoir chronicles a life of hard work and the production of a number of motion pictures on topics that at the time were considered too dangerous for film treatment. He can rightly claim to have been a pioneer in making entertaining films on serious and provocative subjects. Readers hoping for scandalous or hilarious anecdotes will be disappointed. Mr. Kramer will quote a good line, but he ignores gossip. He conforms to the unwritten rule of theatrical memoirs: never speak ill of a colleague who is still alive or whose friends are. Harry Cohn, under whom Mr. Kramer worked at Columbia, is dead and presumably friendless. He is described as "vulgar, domineering, semi-literate, ruthless, boorish, and some might say malevolent"—which suggests that Mr. Kramer has more of a temper than ever appears in his suave recollections.

The Napoleon of Crime

by Ben Macintyre.
Farrar Straus & Giroux,
352 pages, \$24.00.

Mr. Macintyre promises a "love affair between a crook and a canvas" and delivers an even stranger tale. The real-life original of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty was Adam Worth, an American, the son of poor German-Jewish immigrants. He began as a Civil War bounty jumper, progressed to picking pockets in New York, and eventually became the master of a criminal network that ranged from Europe to Latin America to Turkey. His early associates in New York seem to have escaped from Damon Runyon—Boiled Oysters Malloy, Wreck Donovan, Eddie the Plague, Gyp the Blood, and Gallus Mag, a female saloon-keeper who "periodically bit the ears off obstreperous customers." His European crew was less picturesque. Worth aspired to pass for an English gentleman, and controlled his troops. He also had two professional principles: never waste the time and brains required for a successful robbery on a trivial job and never carry a weapon. Privately he was willing to go to

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"Sacrifices for Peace"

What else does the world expect Israel to do?

There is persistent pressure on Israel to bring "sacrifices for peace." It is understood that these "sacrifices" refer to greater "flexibility" in dealing with the Arabs, but mean primarily that Israel should allow its dismemberment, in order to bring peace to the region.

What are the facts?

A Bizarre Concept. The concept to bring "sacrifices for peace" is a new one that has never before found application in world history. It was created by Arab propaganda to induce Israel to agree to its dismemberment, to give strategic assets to those who are determined to destroy it.

Since its creation in 1948, Israel has been subjected to almost constant Arab terror, to unceasing Arab aggression, and to three major wars. In the Six-Day War, it recovered its heartland of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem; it captured the Golan Heights from Syria,

which had been used for decades to shell and spread terror over much of northern Israel; and it conquered Gaza and the Sinai Desert that had been used by Egypt as staging ground and invasion route to Israel.

Many Sacrifices for Peace. In order to achieve peace with its

neighbors, Israel brought sacrifices for peace that have no precedent in the history of the world. For peace with Egypt, Israel returned the entire Sinai. There is little thanks on the part of Egypt for this generosity and this sacrifice for peace. The controlled Egyptian press spews daily anti-Israel venom. President Mubarak has never visited Jerusalem. It is the coolest possible peace. A sacrifice for peace brought in vain—probably a major act of folly on the part of Israel.

Israel made sacrifices for peace by signing a peace treaty with Jordan. In that

Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police."

peace, Israel granted Jordan a large yearly allowance of fresh water from its own dwindling and meager resources and accepted a petty demand for "border rectification"—yielding of land. As for Syria, no offered sacrifice for peace seems to be sufficient to satisfy its dictator, President Hafez Assad. He is unwilling to consider even an ice-cold peace, except for Israel's total surrender of the Golan Heights. Fortunately, under the current Israeli government such a surrender is not in the cards.

The greatest sacrifice for peace that Israel has brought was the resuscitation of the bankrupt and moribund PLO terror organization and the acceptance of it "chairman"

Yasser Arafat as a negotiating partner. In this ill-advised process, foisted on Israel by world pressure and by its previous government, Israel has made far-reaching and existential sacrifices and concessions. It has yielded control of the Gaza Strip and of all major "West Bank" cities

to the Palestinian Authority and has agreed to detailed plans to grant further autonomy to the Palestinians. In what is probably the ultimate folly in this process, Israel has tolerated the formation of a Palestinian "police force" (actually an army) of 40,000 men—the largest police-to-population ratio in the world (!)—and has equipped this "police force" with a complete arsenal of automatic weapons. As the world now knows, these weapons were turned on Israeli soldiers and civilians at the very first opportunity that the Palestinian leaders provoked.

The Arab countries, not Israel, are killing peace in the Middle East. The PLO, apart from the bloody crimes that it has committed against Israel, has now established a virtual dictatorship in the territory allotted to it. In Egypt, thousands of Copts have been killed and their churches burned. President Assad of Syria has occupied Lebanon and has killed and tortured thousands. Iraq, under its dictator Saddam Hussein, is a rogue state attacking its neighbors and killing its own citizens. Saudi Arabia is a monarchical tyranny. Sudan is engaged in the systematic slaughter and enslavement of its black African people. How strange that nobody asks the Palestinians or any of the Arab states to bring any sacrifices for peace. Here are three good sacrifices that the Arabs could bring for peace: (1) Abandon the insistence on recovering the Golan; (2) Stop the clamor about the division of Jerusalem; (3) Disarm the Palestinian "police." Billy clubs are good enough for London Bobbies. Why should any more be needed to patrol Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem?

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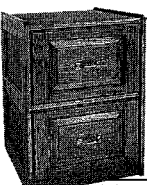
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great expense to get his people out of trouble. It was probably Worth's unexpectedly decent character, combined with his unprecedented skill in redistributing other people's wealth, that won him the respect and even liking of the Pinkerton brothers, detectives who emerge in this engaging narrative as men almost as unlikely as Worth himself.

Tales of H. P. Lovecraft

selected and with an introduction by Joyce Carol Oates.
Ecco, 328 pages, \$25.00.

Given the popularity of horror fiction, it is strange that the work of Lovecraft is not widely known, although it has a devoted cult following. Ms. Oates, who appreciates Lovecraft's ingenuity in evoking strange evils from ordinary surfaces, does not attempt to explain his status. She merely reports it, analyzes with sharp intelligence the elements underlying his fiction, and offers a very well chosen selection of tales.

Here

by Nathalie Sarraute,
translated by Barbara Wright.
Braziller, 163 pages, \$22.50.

According to sound old tradition, one does not speak of rope in the house of the hanged. Ms. Sarraute assumes that this principle is so ingrained in society that people operate on it lightning fast and without deliberate thought. The subject of her idiosyncratic novel is the quick, unconsidered process that occurs behind the normally mannered façade. The novel has no plot, no physical action, and no human characters except by implication. The characters are words—poor little defenseless words panicked into flight, humiliated into paralysis, or evicted for trespassing before they reach audibility. The work is not entirely devoid of incident, however. There is the gathering at which the arrival of a noble name alters the attitudes of all those present. It is truly astonishing to find oneself chuckling over obliquely impersonal satire and pitying unspoken words in a fictional world inhabited by ones and theys. Ms. Sarraute plays by her own rules; the reader who adapts to them will enjoy a witty, provocative view from under the rug.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

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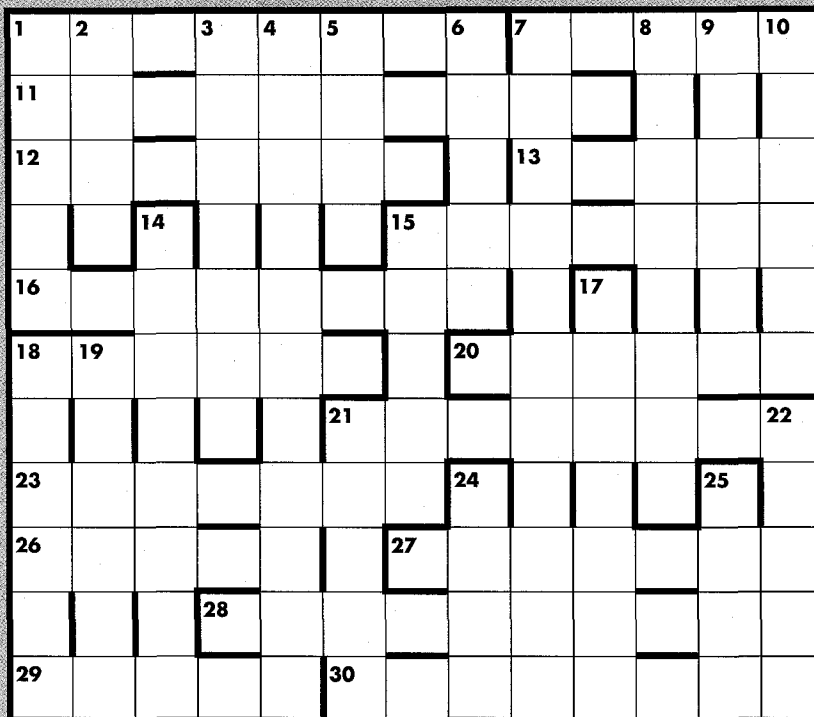
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Double-Crossers

Somewhere in this puzzle there are 11 double-crossers; that is to say, there are 11 letter pairs each shared by a single Across answer and a single Down answer. One letter of each such pair belongs in the square where the two words intersect, but the other letter should be shifted horizontally to a square in the unclued and otherwise uncrossed entry at 4 Down. Solvers will need to determine which letter of the double-crossing pair is to be shifted. When all the shifting double-crossers are in place, they will form an appropriate phrase. To protect the identities of the double-crossers, lengths are not given. Six answers are capitalized.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 107.



Across

1. Place double-crossers the wrong way in beginning
7. Cure for disrupting nocturnal twitch
11. Absorbing composer scores Don Juan and the like
12. Enlightened, made like Sullivan?
13. Some bread bearing excellent image of Mary
15. Try saving the last snow leopards and whales
16. Islander's expression of surprise captured by Italian painter
18. Stunners married hotshots
20. Ending in movie is phony
21. Faithful arrive, mostly wearing gloves?
23. Finally, tell a long story about northern Italian food
26. Fashion poem starting with meter

27. Cracking up at a rusty bunch of carvings

28. Comrade in Italy's capital taking in Dante's earliest, peculiar sort of writing
29. Hamlet characters' dispatch from the east about Ophelia's end
30. Viking running back calls one of the Reagans

Down

1. In part of the fall, briefly, lake lay still
2. Heartless, dirty rotten police
3. Given new supplies after changing diet, fret
5. Journey to remote eastern kingdom, initially
6. Constrict view behind the front
7. Some politicians organized Persian club

8. Predictions about splitting timberlands
9. Double-check street in bad shape
10. School in southern city with average rank
14. Singer's rustic pitch, in C
15. Uranium carried by mine conveyor, along with a bombshell
17. Indulgence for chestnut striking the head
18. Writer of French article in *Mother Earth*
19. Interrupting Dershowitz, cut short sore loser (*hyphenated*)
21. Crook from one N.E. state held in another (*two words*)
22. Produce-craving elder
24. Prison riot?
25. Pervasive atmosphere near Omaha's center

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

Our local newspaper used the words “fun ideas” recently. We have learned that fun is not a descriptive, but we see it used that way all the time. And “everyone” says fun vacation, fun movie, and lots of other things. Is this correct usage now?

Grade Five
Saint Mary–Sacred Heart School
North Attleboro, Mass.

Not that he’s made a scientific study of it, but the psycholinguist Steven Pinker says he can tell whether people are under or over thirty years old by whether they’re willing to accept *fun* as a full-fledged adjective, or what you call a descriptive. Let me guess: you are all under thirty. Regardless, you are quite right to question whether standard English allows *fun* to be used as an adjective. It doesn’t, really. *Fun* may exhibit



some adjective-like qualities at times, but it is a noun. And I’m not telling you how old I am. If you’ll promise not to say “I had the *fun*-nest time” or “That was *so fun*,” though, I’ll tell you why *fun ideas*, *fun vacation*, and *fun movie* really aren’t so bad. Lots of nouns are used “attributively,” or as adjectives in front of other nouns. Think of *science-project ideas* and *Christmas vacation* and *action movie*. You won’t find *science* or *project* or *Christmas* or *action* in the dictionary as an adjective; each is a noun, like *fun*. But all these words, and most nouns, can be used attributively.

Being clear about this point of grammar has its pluses and its minuses. Sticklers are likely to assume that you’re misusing *fun* where it’s not obviously a noun, so maybe you should steer clear of attributive uses when you want to make a good impression on people over thirty.

I am writing this in the desperate hope that you will save my marriage. My wife and I have nearly come to blows over the proper use of the words bring and take. She keeps insisting that she will bring our daughter to the library, and I say that my daughter is going nowhere unless her mother takes her. I am unable to convince my wife that she is wrong about this and needs to turn from her grammatically evil ways. Please help this syntaxed family.

James Raffan
Coleman, Alberta

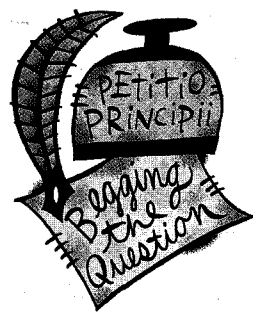
The fundamental rule is that *bring*, in its relevant sense, refers to movement toward the speaker (“Will you *bring* me some new library books?”), and *take* to movement away from the speaker (“How nice of you to *take* back the ones I’ve read”). These verbs can also indicate movement toward or away from anyone from whose perspective the action is being viewed (“She *brought* the librarian a gift. The librarian *took* it home”). Curiously, with these words seemingly opposite meanings can overlap, particularly when people are *bringing* or *taking* someone or something with them (“Let’s *bring* [or *take*] plenty of books with us”). But I gather that your daughter isn’t just accompanying her mother; she’s the reason for the trip. Your wife, diligent mother though she may be, then, is not *bringing* but *taking* her.

In a recent music review in The Boston Globe, I read, “Begging the question of whether simplicity is a virtue or a vice . . .” For centuries philosophers and logicians have used beg the question (and its Latin version, *petitio principii*) to refer to the fallacy of assuming that which is in dispute—as in the presumption behind the question

“Have you stopped beating your wife?” Lately, however, the phrase seems to have been turned into a sorry attempt at an upscale version of either evade or invite the question. Is it too late to save this fine old phrase?

Daniel Dennett
North Andover, Mass.

I can’t find any evidence that the meaning “invites the question” is common, but reputable dictionaries have been accepting the meaning “evades the question” for decades. Still, things haven’t reached the point that anyone is saying that the phrase in its traditional meaning is wrong. That meaning is in trouble because it is confusing. It has nothing to do with what most of us think of as begging; nor does it necessarily involve a question (an example that H. W. Fowler gives in *Modern English Usage* is that “capital punishment is necessary because without it murders would increase”). And *petitio principii*, from which the phrase was long ago translated and which is generally given as a synonym, is an expression that doesn’t come up much in conversation. So we have nothing to help us call to mind *beg the question* when it is wanted. Maybe we should all lodge the idea of “asserting what needs to be proved” in our minds. When that seems to be what’s going on, it’s the moment to say, “Excuse me—I do believe you’re *begging the question*.”



Have you recently had a language dispute that you would like this column to resolve? Write to Word Court in care of *The Atlantic Monthly*, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send E-mail to MsGrammar@TheAtlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court.



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